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# PRINCIPLES

OF

# RELIGIOUS LIFE.

BY

THE VERY REV.

FRANCIS CUTHBERT DOYLE, O.S.B.,

AUTHOR OF 'LECTURES FOR BOYS,' 'LIFE OF GREGORY LOPEZ, THE HERMIT.' &c.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

R. & T. WASHBOURNE, LTD., 1, 2, & 4, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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1906.

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

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To the

RIGHT REV. JOHN CUTHBERT HEDLEY, D.D.,

O.S.B.

LORD BISHOP OF NEWPORT,

AT WHOSE SUGGESTION

THIS WORK WAS FIRST UNDERTAKEN,

THESE PAGES ARE

Most Affectionately Dedicated,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

# PREFACE.

THE chief object for which this work has been written is to furnish those who wish to lead a solidly devout life in the Ecclesiastical, in the Religious, or in the Secular State, with a manual or text-book containing, in as compendious a form as possible, the 'principles' upon which such a life must be built.

The sources whence materials for an undertaking of this kind may be drawn are various and numerous; but out of the many at my disposal, two are especially deserving of mention, inasmuch as it has been by the doctrine which I have learnt from them, that I have been guided in much that has been treated of in this book. The first of these are the works of Cassian, to which, as a child of St. Benedict, I felt myself drawn as it were by instinct; for, it was from the world-famed 'Conferences' of this learned ascetic that our holy Father drew much of that spiritual lore which is so conspicuous in the various enactments of his Rule, and to the pages of which he refers his children, for those sublime lessons of spiritual wisdom, which will lead them to the topmost height of Christian perfection.* Cassian's teaching, save upon the question of divine grace, is unexceptionally good. His deficiency upon this point may be satisfactorily accounted for, if we bear in mind that in his day various questions which arise out of this most intricate subject had not been thoroughly examined into and set at rest for ever by the infallible decision of the Church. The second is the 'Theologia Mystica' of Father Dominick Schram, O.S.B., in which that erudite Religious has bequeathed to us valuable treasures of Christian asceticism arranged with scientific accuracy, and stored away with scholastic neatness and precision.

The plan of which I have made use for reducing to order the mass of material which presented itself to my hands, is a very simple one. It may be stated thus: in the life of

* Regula, c. xlii. et lxxiii.

every man there is an *ultimate end*, which is God. But in order to reach that ultimate end, man must comply with certain conditions which have been laid down by God for the attainment of so magnificent a destiny. Therefore, besides his ultimate end, man has also a *subordinate end*, or object in life. This is to win for himself that measure of perfection which is compatible with his state here below. Perfection, however, is made up of three elements ; of charity, of purity of heart, and of humility, all which must be made so to enter the very fibres of his being, as to become part and parcel of himself. To obtain this subordinate end, there are various means at man's disposal, chief among which are, prayer, divine grace, docility to the movements and inspirations of the Holy Spirit, imitation of Christ, and mortification, both internal and external.

Upon each of these subjects, and upon the various ramifications into which some of them logically lead, ample instructions have been given. These will, perhaps, prove useful to those who are endeavouring to lead devout lives in the world. For those who wish to enter the Ecclesiastical State, there are chapters devoted to the treatment of subjects which are special to their sacred calling. Finally, for those who, in order to obtain perfection, make their self-renunciation perpetual by means of vows in the Religious State, several chapters have been set aside for the explanation of those holy bonds by which they are more closely united to God.

Also, an Appendix has been added, in which each chapter has been carefully analysed. These outlines or sketches of the matter which the reader shall have already perused will, it is hoped, enable him to obtain a firmer grasp of it ; they will help him to imprint it more deeply upon his mind ; and if he should happen to be sealed with the priestly character, and entrusted with the cure of souls, they will furnish him with plans by the aid of which he will be able to use the doctrine contained in this volume for the spiritual training of those committed to his charge.

ALCESTER, WARWICKSHIRE 1906.

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# PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE.

## CHAPTER I.

### *RELIGIOUS LIFE.*

### SECTION I.

#### ITS ULTIMATE AND ITS SUBORDINATE END.

THE all-absorbing purpose of a man's life is called his end, because that purpose is the terminus to which his energies are directed, the resting-place in which, after his laborious efforts, he takes his ease, and in which he is supposed to find content. But besides this chief end, there is always in the mind of each man a secondary or subordinate end, upon the attainment of which the acquisition of the ultimate end, as a general rule, is made to depend. We may illustrate our meaning by supposing the case of some young artist, who, conscious of his own ability, and fired with enthusiasm by the study of the great masters, determines to reach the proud eminence which they have already won for themselves and to rival their world-wide fame. To fight his way to the front and to take the foremost place among those who compete with him for the same honour, will be the all-absorbing purpose of his life, or his ultimate end. But if he be a man of sense, and not a mere enthusiast, he will be quite alive to the fact that something more than lofty aspirations and an ambitious will is requisite to carry him through the host of opposing difficulties standing in

his path, and barring his way to eminence. He must possess that perfection of artistic skill which will triumph over every obstacle, break through the serried ranks of adverse critics, and seat him high above his rivals, crowned with that world-wide fame which has been the object of his heart's fondest wishes. The acquisition, therefore, of this artistic excellence will be his secondary or subordinate end.

Now just as the artist, the politician, and the men of science have in their lives an end towards the attainment of which all their energies are directed, so also has the religious man an all-absorbing object, after which he strives with his whole heart, with his whole strength, and with his whole mind. This is the possession of God in the never-ending bliss of heaven; and if men would but rightly consider the matter, this, and this only, is and it should be the end of every man, whether his days are spent in the peace of the cloister, or amid the whirl and the excitement of the battle-field of everyday life. But, like the artist, the politician, and the man of science, the religious man also has a subordinate end, by the attainment of which he wins for himself the ultimate end of his existence. This according to St. Thomas, is the perfection of charity, or that love by which we love God above all other things whatever. The older Ascetics, with Cassian, tell us that it is purity of heart, or detachment of our tenderness or love from all created things. From this it seems that among theologians there is, on this point, some divergence of opinion; but a little reflection will show that this divergence is only apparent, and that different names are given by them to the same thing. For upon examination we discover that the end to which a religious man directs his aim has two sides or aspects, the one positive, the other negative. The positive side, according to St. Thomas, is charity, and says, 'God alone;' the negative side, according to Cassian, is purity of heart, and says, 'No creature.' Both these express the same thing in different words, just as we might express the fact of the English ambassador's having gone to Paris,

by stating either positively, that he has reached that city, or negatively that he has not stayed at any other. So also with a man's last end: it is, positively speaking, God; but for that very reason it is, negatively speaking, detachment from all that is not God. Therefore, charity and purity of heart are the same thing, viewed from different sides; charity says, 'God alone,' purity of heart says, 'No creature.

There is, moreover, another virtue most intimately connected with perfection. This is humility, which may be defined in a genéral sort of way to be 'the preventing or the holding in of the soul's appetite for undue elevation.' Some writers go so far as to call humility 'perfection.' Our holy Father St. Benedict seems to be of this number, for in that chapter in which he treats of humility he says: 'The monk who has ascended all these degrees of humility will presently come to that love of God which is perfect and which casteth out fear.'[1] Others, again, looking at it with respect to the virtues, liken it sometimes to the foundation of a magnificent structure, sometimes to a species of spiritual leaven which must permeate the whole man before he can be called perfect. In order, therefore, to obtain a clear idea of the sense in which humility is said to be the foundation of perfection, or to be perfection itself, we must bear in mind, as the Fathers and other spiritual writers teach, that there are four ways in which the repressive force of humility is brought to bear upon the soul's appetite for undue elevation. First, when it causes us not to take credit to ourselves for what we do not possess. It exercised this influence upon St. John the Baptist when the Jews asked him: 'Art thou the Christ?' and he answered, 'I am not.'[2] Secondly, when it induces us not inordinately to prefer any good which we chance to possess to the good with which God may have endowed others. It was acting in this way upon the Apostle's soul when, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, he said of himself and of the other Apostles: 'We are weak, but you are strong; you are honourable, but we without honour.'[3] Thirdly,

[1] Regula, Cap. vii. [2] St John i. 20. [3] 1 Cor. iv. 10.

when it makes us acknowledge, with all sincerity, that what we have is not our own, or due to any merit of ours: 'What hast thou,' asks the Apostle, 'that thou hast not received?'[1] Fourthly, when we are led by it to confess, in the same heartfelt way, that God is the sole author and preserver of all the good that is in us, of whatever kind that good may be. In this spirit the great Apostle, speaking of himself, says: 'By the grace of God, I am what I am: and His grace in me hath not been void, but I have laboured more abundantly than all they; yet not I, but the grace of God with me.'[2] It is in this last sense that humility is said by spiritual writers to be the foundation of perfection. Thus, St. Bernard: 'Humility is the virtue by which a person, by means of a thorough and real knowledge of himself, becomes lowly in his own eyes; and St. Francis of Sales: 'Humility is a perfect recognition that we are nothing but pure nothing.'[3] St. Augustine describing pride, places its essence 'in the perverse desire of elevation,'[4] which desire he explains to be 'adhesion to any other principle save the one principle.' Therefore, humility, is the clinging of the soul to Almighty God. It is with respect to self what detachment is with respect to creatures. Cassian, consequently, places the two together when he says: 'Humility cannot be acquired without detachment;'[5] and St. Prosper somewhere defines humility to be: 'Truth in the sight of God.' It may, therefore, be described as: 'The creature's affective acknowledgment of its true place and worth, namely, its nothingness as compared with its Creator.' In this view the essense of perfection may be said to consist of three elements: *charity*, or the tending of the creature to its absolute end—'God alone;' *humility* or the true and clear knowledge of self—'I am nothing of myself;' *detachment*, or purity of heart, which is the total renunciation of all creatures—'Nothing out of God.'

From this, however, we must not imagine that *perfection*

[1] Cor. v. 7. [2] Cor. xv. 10. [3] Entretien, v. [4] De Civ. Dei. xiv. 13. [5] Cassian, De Cœnob. Instit., Lib. xii. 31.

is in itself *three* things; it is of its very nature *one*—act, habit, or state, as the case may be. But though one, yet it may be said to have three sides, each of which implies the other two.

Such, then, is the idea of perfection, or of the love of God above all things, which is the subordinate end of the religious man's life. When he has attained to it, he will be entitled to the possession of God in the heavenly kingdom which possession is the ultimate end of every rational creature.

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## SECTION II.

### THE INSTRUMENTS OF PERFECTION.

AT the end of his chapter on good works, our holy Father St. Benedict calls the laborious method by which man attains to that perfection about which we have been speaking, 'the spiritual art.' As in the case of every other art, so also in this, there are means which must be made use of in the mastering of it, and these he calls the 'implements or tools with which the spiritual artist accomplishes the noble task imposed upon him.' Pursuing the metaphor still farther, he styles the cloister, or that place where the monk is stationed by his Superiors, the 'workshop, office, or studio in which he must abide patiently performing his allotted work, till the evening closes, and the day of life declines, and the great master comes to say: 'Cease now thy labour; it is enough.' This figurative language will help us admirably well to understand the nature and the use of those multiform and various means of perfection which we are so apt to mistake for perfection itself.

It must, then, be always borne in mind that the means by which men are counselled to perfect themselves in the spiritual life are not perfection itself. Therefore, fasting, meditation, poverty, obedience, and the rest, are not perfection, but only so many implements or tools, by the aid

of which we are enabled to reach the perfection of the love of God. They no more constitute perfection than the painter's brushes, or the sculptor's mallet and chisels, or the artisan's tools, constitute painting, or sculpture, or mechanics. St. Benedict, therefore, spoke with philosophical precision when he called the means of perfection 'the implements or tools' of the spiritual art. Like all tools, they will cease to be of use and they will, therefore, be laid aside when man shall have attained to the possession of his absolute end in the kingdom of God. There will then be no fasting, no watching, no painful self-repression, for God will wipe away the tears from the eyes of His Saints and sorrow, and crying, and labour shall be no more.

First, then among the implements of perfection comes prayer, which from another point of view may be looked upon as the essence of perfection, inasmuch as the acts of charity, humility, and detachment are prayer. Here we regard it only as an instrument; for, as everyone speedily discovers, not one single step forward can be made without its assistance.[1] We are as helpless without its aid as a cripple is without his crutches, or as a blind man is without his guide. We cannot think a good thought, nor can we say a good word, nor meritoriously utter even the name 'Jesus.' For, as all strength, and all power, and all will to be perfect come from God, it is necessary for man to go to Him in time of need, as to the source of all good. But God will not suffer the waters of His grace to overflow and to fertilise our barren souls unless we ask Him to do so: 'Ask and you shall receive.' Prayer, therefore, or petition to Our Lord, is an instrument of perfection, because it is by prayer that we obtain the help or *grace* of God, though it must be confessed that even the power or the inclination to pray is itself a grace freely bestowed.

Grace is the second instrument of perfection; but as we will treat of it more at large farther on, nothing more need here be said about it.

[1] Unless, indeed, it should please Almighty God to help us by His 'preventing grace,' which is given without prayer.

Attention to the internal working of the Holy Spirit and of grace in the soul, is another instrument of perfection. For, the struggle of a man to win his sublime end is an invisible and interior effort made by the soul and assisted by God. To recognise this interior working of the soul towards perfection, and to apply its powers to make more strenuous efforts to correspond with the aid given by God, is the interior life in its good sense. 'This interior life consists in two things; on the one hand, in the operations of God in the soul, in the lights that illumine the understanding, and the inspirations that affect the will; on the other, in the co-operation of the soul with the lights and movements of grace.'[1] Our holy Father's[3] expressions when speaking of the first degree of humility have reference to the incipient efforts of newly converted souls to pay attention to the interior life: 'Let not the monk,' he says, be forgetful of himself: let him be mindful of all that God hath commanded, keeping himself at all times from sin; and let him be solicitous about his thoughts.' The outcome of this attention to the internal operations of grace will be great docility of soul to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The fourth instrument is the imitation of Jesus Christ; for He came into the world not only to die for us, and to pay, by His death, the price of our redemption, but to show us how to live in such a way as to make the ransom our own. Therefore, His intention is that His life should be the model upon which all men are to fashion theirs in striving to attain to perfection. Therefore, the imitation of it is necessary for all, whether they wish to know what instruments to use, or how to use them. St. Benedict refers to this instrument when he says of the Religious who aims at perfection: 'Let him follow Christ.'[3] Now, if men find it easier to form in themselves habits of virtue, when they see embodied in men like themselves the very virtues after which they are striving, with what facility should the

[1] Lallement, Spirit. Doct., p. 210. [2] Regula, Cap. vii.
[3] Regula Cap. iv.

Religious advance in perfection when the model put before him is none other than the God-Man Christ Jesus?

Renunciation is the fifth instrument of perfection, and is, perhaps, of all other instruments, the most important; for, while all the rest ought to be used by seculars as well as by Regulars, this is the distinguishing mark by which the Regular should be known. As we have already seen, perfection consists in adhering to God by leaving ourselves and creatures. This, of course, *may* be done without relinquishing the use and the possession of creatures. But we know that the possession of such things hinders men from attaining *great* perfection, and in many cases renders it impossible. Hence, the Religious, whose aim is to reach the highest perfection unto which the grace of God may enable him to attain, resolves to cut off from himself whatever may either bar his progress or impede him in his journey up the mountain of God. This is the end of all who undertake the Religious Life. Therefore, in the Prologue to his Rule, St. Benedict plainly tells those who wish to embrace his Institute that he is about to legislate only for those 'who, *renouncing* their own will, take upon themselves the strong and bright armour of *obedience*, to fight under the Lord Christ, our true King.'[1] Also Cassian, from whose 'Conferences' our holy Father drew much of that spiritual wisdom which shines so conspicuously in the Rule, maintains 'that the end of the Cenobite is to mortify and crucify his desires.'[2] He does not, of course, in this passage mean to affirm that renunciation is the monk's ultimate end, which is God; or his subordinate end, which is perfection; but his formal end, or that which distinguishes him from all others as a Religious. St. Francis of Sales[3] is evidently of the same opinion, for he says: 'To be a Religious is to be bound to God by a continual mortification of ourselves.' Again; 'It is impossible to acquire union of the soul with God by any means but by mortification.' Like Cassian, he also is

[1] In Reg, Prologus. [2] Collat. xix., Cap. viii. [3] Entretien, xx.

speaking of the formal or distinguishing end of the Religious Life, and not of its absolute, or of its subordinate end, and is using the word *mortification* in its wide sense for *renunciation.*

Without pretending to make an exhaustive division, we may say that renunciation has four parts or branches, which are: obedience, mortification, poverty, and chastity. Anyone who is conversant with the works of spiritual writers will see at once that some one of these branches is used by them for the general term 'renunciation.' Thus, obedience with one writer will include all the others; with another, mortification; poverty, with others; and with others, and especially with mystic writers, chastity. But the generality of theologians include all renunciation under obedience; and the reason will be manifest from the following passage taken from the 'Life of St. Theresa': 'The reason why obedience is so speedy and so sure a way of arriving at perfection is that to attain to this state our will must be subject to reason, and obedience is the shortest and most efficacious means of bringing it into this subjection. Our Lord, because we subject our will and our reason to others for His sake, gives us the mastery of our own will, which we are then enabled to offer with perfect freedom to God.'[1] So that, whether obedience is regarded as a spiritual virtue of subjection to others for God's sake, or as a virtue which includes implicitly mortification, poverty, chastity, and the rest, it may fitly be called the summary of renunciation. Hence, in the form prescribed by St. Benedict for taking the vows, only obedience is mentioned; and though he also introduces the words 'stability and amendment of manners,' yet these are nothing more than an amplification of what is understood by obedience. Some authors have consequently called it 'the scope of the Benedictine;'[2] not indeed in the sense which Cassian attaches to that word, that is to say, his subordinate end, but his scope

[1] Life of St. Theresa, p. 174, edited by H. E. Card. Manning.

[2] Martène, In Regulam.

as a Religious renouncing creatures and self. We must understand St. Jerome to be speaking in the same sense when he says: 'The first duty of a Cenobite is to obey the commands of another;[1] and St Francis of Sales considers that obedience to the Rule includes all renunciation: 'I assure you, on the part of God, that if you are faithful in doing what your Rule teaches you, you will *undoubtedly* arrive at the end at which you aim, that is, *union with God*.'[2]

Mortification, which we have given as a branch of renunciation, is sometimes made to include obedience. It would, perhaps, be more correct to consider it as a special virtue, having under it several inferior branches, such as external and internal mortifications, humiliations, and the rest. Other branches of renunciation are poverty and chastity. They are most efficacious means or instruments for attaining to charity or union with God, because the actual cutting off and separating ourselves from creatures does more to wean us from the love of them, than a great deal of reflection unaccompanied by any such excision.

Renunciation, then, as we have already seen, is, as it were, the specificating quality or virtue which makes the Religious a Religious, and not a secular. In order to confirm this difference of state, and make it lasting, he prevents himself from ever withdrawing from his renunciations by making a *vow*. By that act he is said, and is truly said, to be in a *state of perfection*, because, while other men attain to perfection, when they *do* attain to it, not by the nature of their state, but by their own efforts in making the best of that state, which is of itself indifferent, the Religious lives in a *state* of life, or in a fixed and stable *way* of life, which, of its own nature, tends to perfection; and it has this tendency, because of its own nature it is stripped of self and of creatures, which are the obstacles to perfection or charity. It does not, however, by any means follow from this that a given Religious is more perfect than a given secular, but that the state of life pursued by a Reli-

[1] *Idem.* [2] Entretien, xx.

gious *ought to lead him to perfection;* whereas that of a secular, being at best indifferent, either may or it may not do so. Such, then, in brief, are the chief instruments of perfection, to one or to another of which all the rest may be reduced.

## SECTION III.

### THE MOTIVE POWER.

To the worldling or to the unbeliever, the Religious is as great a puzzle as either a watch or any piece of intricate mechanism is to the inexperienced child. For when he is brought in contact with him, he sees a man whose life is altogether different from his own—whose thoughts are not his thoughts, whose ways are not the ways of any with whom he is acquainted. The Religious cares not for wealth or for position; he turns away from pleasure; he resigns his liberty, and submits himself to the will of another. A thoughtful man in these circumstances, will do what a child invariably does when in a similar state of perplexity: he will try to get to the bottom of the anomaly before him, and to understand what that thing is which makes the Religious act so differently from the men with whom he is familiar; he will try to find out the main spring which sets in motion the mysteries of the life which he is endeavouring to understand, and he will discover that it is the fear of God. The religious man has a living faith in the existence of that Supreme Being upon Whom all men depend for life, and for whatever they either have or can be. Consequently, because he is dependent upon God, he believes that he is answerable to Him for his actions, and that God will first judge, and will then either reward or punish him in accordance with His infinite justice. This thought fills him with fear; and this fear of what an Almighty Being is able to inflict by way of retribution makes him pour forth his soul in prayer, and watch atten-

tively over the movements of his heart, lest it should betray him into any offence against a God of so great majesty. A disposition such as this will make him obedient to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit; it will urge him to imitate the virtues of which the God-Man has left us finished models; it will make him deny himself, and lead a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience, in order the more securely to gain possession of God, and of the happiness of eternal life. Thus, the worldling and the unbeliever will see that the fear of God is the main spring of the Religious Life.

Generally speaking, it is this fear that in the first instance draws a man from the world, retains him in the cloister, and inspires him with that ardour which makes him tend ever onward towards perfection. Anyone who reads the Holy Rule will see that St. Benedict looked upon the fear of God in this light. In the Prologue, he says that it is the motive power which stirs up the beginner to employ all that he has in mental or in bodily gifts, in the divine service, lest God should disinherit him as an unworthy child, and deliver him up to perpetual punishment as a wicked and faithless servant. He puts it forward again as an incentive to the prompt rejection of unholy thoughts, and as the very ground upon which the ladder of humility is to rest, by means of which ladder the Religious must ascend to the height of perfection, and enter into the possession of God.[1] Cassian calls fear 'the principle of our salvation and its safeguard; for by it we can obtain the beginning of our conversion to God, the cleansing of our soul from vices, and the defence and guardianship of the virtues planted in their stead.'[2] This language is no mere rhetorical flourish, but the sober expression of masters who have studied the whole theory of the spiritual life, and who know with scientific accuracy the results which, under certain conditions, must flow from given causes.

A glance at some of the results of the fear of God will serve to bring out into clearer light the truth of this con-

[1] Reg., Prolog. and Cap. vii.
[2] Cœnob. Instit., Lib. iv., Cap. xxxix.

clusion. The first of these is great sorrow for past offences against Almighty God. In the beginning, this sorrow has more dread of punishment mingled with it than grief for the insult offered to God by sin; nevertheless, in process of time, and in proportion to the soul's advance in love, this baser element is quite purged away, till at last only the pure gold of heartfelt contrition for having offended so good a God remains in the treasury of the heart. Then succeeds a state of permanent sorrow, called compunction, which is not so vehement as were the first outbursts of the heart's affliction, but, from the soul now filled with the love of God, it flows in a more tranquil, and therefore in a purer stream. When so disposed, the soul is animated with eagerness to do all that is pleasing to the Divine Majesty; it is ever ready to carry out the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

Now if these are the results of the fear of God, there can surely be no exaggeration in saying that it is the beginning of our conversion to God, a sure means to keep us in the rugged way in which we have begun to tread, a remedy which will purge us of every taint of vice, and the prolific seed of future virtues. For, the spur of fear, which has now become the loving fear of a son who dreads to offend his father, never suffers the soul to grow sluggish, or to lie down in the torpor of tepidity and of negligence. Fear causes it ever to stretch forwards, and to push onwards to that perfection which is the subordinate aim of man's existence.

This continual advance in the ways of God fills the soul with habits of virtue, and thereby uproots and casts out the vicious habits which a forgetfulness of God and of eternity causes to spring up there in rank luxuriance. By reason of these virtuous habits, all that was difficult in the spiritual life becomes easy. The will no longer holds back its full assent to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, nor does it pay with niggard hand the service which He requires. As soon as His voice is heard, it obeys promptly, and executes fully whatever He commands. There is, in fact,

as much difference between its spiritual action now, and its first attempts to follow the leading of the Spirit, as there is between the finished execution of an accomplished musician, and the blundering efforts of a beginner, who is laboriously strumming through his scales and gamuts. Speedily, therefore, does it advance along the path of perfection; and because it is thus advancing, it enjoys that peace which belongs only to those who are generous with God, and who strive to win that absolute perfection which will be theirs when the figure of this world shall have passed away. Nevertheless, though possessed of that peace which surpasses all understanding, they are not, on that account, free from the turmoil of war. For they are still in the flesh, and as long as the spirit is forced to dwell in its house of clay, it will always be in strife and conflict. The spirit will struggle to subdue the flesh, and the flesh will rebel against and endeavour to gain the mastery over the spirit. Still, in the superior or rational part of the soul, a part which St. Francis of Sales calls the 'point or apex of the spirit,' there will always be a profound peace as long as the soul, by God's help, is in the state of grace.

Therefore the peace and the calm promised to those who, beginning in the fear of God, have conquered and who do actually hold in subjection the fallen nature which is our inheritance, are not always in that comfortable, contented frame of mind which men suppose them to be. Oftentimes they are only the result of the firm judgment of the reason that we are the friends of God, and, therefore, that it will be well with us when this living death shall have been swallowed up in the victorious life of the future.

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## SECTION IV.

### PROGRESS IN PERFECTION.

It is only natural that anyone journeying towards some given spot should wish from time to time to know how far

he has gone, and how much of the way yet remains to be traversed. To gratify this desire he has various means by which to calculate the distance. He considers the nature of the ground over which he has travelled and the speed at which he has been going; or, if the road should happen to be measured and marked for the convenience of travellers, he consults the milestones by the wayside and thus arrives at a correct conclusion as to his whereabouts.

Those also who are on the road to perfection desire, now and then, to measure their progress; and it is useful for them to do so. For, when they discover that they have made considerable advance, they are encouraged to persevere in their arduous journey; and if they find that they are receding, or that they are making either little or no progress, they are incited to push forward more strenuously, through a well-grounded fear lest the dark night of death may close in upon them before they have reached the long-wished-for goal.

Anyone, therefore, who desires to find out what progress he has made along the road of perfection, may do so in one of two ways: either by measuring that distance with regard to perfection itself, or by seeing with what facility he has learnt to ply the instruments which help men onwards in the rugged way. If he chooses the first method, he must examine and see in what way he loves God and his neighbour; whether he is ready to give up everything that stands between him and God, and to look upon each of his fellow-men as a second self; whether his affections are so well regulated that they are detached from all creatures whatever or are fastened to them in order by their aid to fix themselves only the more firmly upon the Supreme Good; whether, in fine, he looks upon himself as pure nothing in the sight of that Being, and affectively confesses that whatever he has, or whatever he is able to do, comes from God's almighty hand.

If he can say that he has advanced in the love of God, in detachment and in humility, then in exact proportion to his advance in these virtues will his progress in perfection

be, for they are the elements which go to make up perfection. But if he choose the second method, he will then have to discover what proficiency he has acquired in prayer; in what measure he has imitated Christ; obeyed the inspirations and seconded the operations of the Holy Spirit in the soul by attention to His suggestions; and by renunciation in its several branches of obedience, poverty, mortification, and chastity.

In using the second method, each must be careful to remember that these various instruments of perfection are not its absolute, but only its relative, measure. By his skill in their use, and by the ease with which he is able to employ them, he will be able to estimate the progress which he has made towards perfection. Moreover, as holy men have mapped out the whole road which leads to perfection, and have divided it into three regions, he will be able to tell at what place he has arrived, and how far he has yet to go, by discovering in which of the regions he chances to be.

The first of these is called the *purgative way*, because it is that in which are advancing towards perfection beginners who ordinarily have to cleanse themselves from their sins, their faults, their sloth, and their lukewarmness.

The second is called the *illuminative way*, in which those who have made some progress are walking, after having cleansed their hearts of the filth of their sins. In this stage of their journey heavenwards, men, aided by God's all-powerful grace, apply themselves daily to increase in virtue, and, like St. Paul, forgetting the progress which they have already made, to press onward to the mark, to the prize of their supernal vocation.[1]

The third is called the *unitive way*, in which those are enabled to walk, who, being purged from all vices and well grounded in virtue, are now, by charity, closely united to God, and who may, therefore, be said to be comparatively perfect.

The division of the road of perfection into three regions,

[1] Philip. iii. 13.

corresponding to the three classes of Christian men—that is to say, beginners, proficients, and the comparatively perfect—must not be taken quite rigorously and with mathematical nicety; for, as charity is the common foundation of all three, there is none of them that does not share, more or less, in some way or other, in the characteristics of the rest. By charity we root out vices; by charity we plant virtues and bring them to maturity; by charity we enter into close union with God. Hence, in the spiritual life there is, properly speaking, but one road to perfection, and one state, and that is charity, in which every man who aims at the salvation of his soul, is either more or less advanced, and he has, therefore, made a great or only a little progress in perfection. Therefore, it would perhaps be more correct to say that the roads which lead to perfection, or those three regions which have been mapped out by spiritual men for beginners, for proficients, and for the comparatively perfect, are really *parallel;* and the truth of this will be more manifest if we illustrate our meaning by an example.

Let us suppose that we have fixed upon a certain city as our abode for the winter, and that we have set out, staff in hand, to walk thither, as the pilgrims of old were wont to do. On consulting the map we discover that there are three roads which lead to it, one along the plain, another along the mountain side, the third along a lofty ridge of the mountain top. At first we take the road which winds through the level plain at the mountain's base. But after a time we find that we can climb up on the side of the mountain to the higher road on which we are able to travel faster, and though locomotion is much easier than on the road beneath, yet we find ourselves at times, and for distances of greater or of less extent, back again upon the lower road, and then once more back upon the road which we have left. At last we make our way to the mountain's ridge, and there upon the topmost level, discover that we are able to travel so fast, that a single stride bears us more rapidly and to a greater distance, than does long, laborious, and

painful walking upon the plain below. But yet there are times when we find ourselves upon the one or the other of the lower roads, and though we thereby retard our progress, we do not altogether stop it; for all the roads will eventually conduct us to the city in which we have determined to winter.

So also is it in the spiritual life: the ways to perfection are parellel; they all lead to the same end; nevetherless those who travel along the unitive and the illuminative way will be more intimately and more closely united to their end, which is God, than those will be who have travelled along the lowest level; not because the act of charity is more intense in the higher path than it is in the lower, for, it may be as fervid in the lower as it is in the higher, but because in the higher the motive of action is more elevated, and consequently is less interested than it is in the lower path.

It is worthy of notice that this division of the road of perfection, into three paths, is not a mere fanciful partition made in an arbitrary manner by spiritual writers without any solid reasons to support it. A glance at the Scriptures and at the writings of the Fathers will serve to dispel at once any such notion. David insinuates this division when he says: 'Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee: in his heart he hath disposed *to ascend by steps* in the vale of tears, in the place which he hath set. For the Lawgiver shall give a blessing; they *shall go from virtue to virtue*.'[1] A striking figure of it is to be found in that mystic ladder which Jacob saw in vision, when fleeing from his infuriated brother. The Angels whom he beheld may be taken to represent those of the faithful who are aspiring to perfection; and the steps of the ladder, the various degrees of perfection by which the possession of God is won. Our holy Father evidently looked upon it in this light, for he says to all who desire speedily to reach that exaltation which is won through the lowliness of this present life: 'By your *ascending* actions a ladder must be set up, such as appeared in sleep to Jacob,'[2] and by it you must climb, even

[1] Ps. lxviii. [2] Reg., Cap. vii.

to the kingdom of God." St. Paul, too, was doubtless thinking of these gradations in perfection when he made use of the difference existing between childhood and manhood, to illustrate the difference between our present imperfect state and that to which we may ultimately attain by the aid of God's grace: 'When I was a child,' he says, 'I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child.'[1]

This threefold division is admitted also by the great St. Augustine: 'Do you suppose,' he says, 'that justice is perfect at its very birth? It most certainly is not. It is born, in order to become perfect; after its birth it is nourished; by being nourished it grows strong; and by advancing in strength it becomes perfect; and only when it is perfect is it able to say: "To me to live is Christ, and to die a gain." '[2] Also St. Thomas shows by reason that there is a logical foundation for this threefold division. 'The degrees of charity,' he says, 'may be distinguished from one another by the different ways in which its increase in any given man, affects the aim of his life. At first it is to ward off all taint of sin and to resist concupiscence, which engenders in his heart impulses contrary to charity. In this stage he is only a beginner, in whom charity must be cherished and fed, in order not utterly to die out. In the next place his aim is to advance in good, by increasing and strengthening charity in his soul, and then he is among those who are making progress. At last his aim is to attach himself to God in order to enjoy Him, and then he is among the number of the perfect who long for death, in order to be united to Jesus Christ.'[3]

Therefore, whoever wishes to measure his advance in perfection may do so, either by examining what progress he has made in charity, detachment, and humility, which virtues constitute perfection; or by seeing with what facility he can use the implements of that spriritual art by which perfection is attained; and lastly, by discovering on

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 11. [2] De Nat. et Grat. [3] St. Thomas, II., ii., q. 24, a. 9.

which of the three roads he is travelling towards his ultimate end—the possession of God in the kingdom of heaven.

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## SECTION V.

### DISCRETION.

In the pursuit of perfection there is one virtue which we must have, otherwise our efforts will prove unavailing. This virtue is *discretion* or heavenly prudence, which guides and directs the spiritual man in his acts, and enables him to keep the golden mean in which as the philosophers say, virtue consists. It is defined by St. Basil to be: 'The true science of that which it is necessary to do.'[1] In any given act it shows us what is good and true, and what is false and hurtful, in order that we may avoid the one and accomplish the other.

It bestows keenness of vision to discover the right object to be aimed at in every action, and soundness of judgment to select the means which will most securely and most speedily enable us to compass it. In the Sacred Scriptures it is sometimes called wisdom; at others, prudence; at others, discernment of spirits. St. Paul places it among the gifts of the Holy Ghost: 'To one man,' he says, 'is given the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another, the discernment of spirits.'[2] How necessary it is for anyone who wishes to walk in the strait and rugged way will be evident from the urgency with which the Wise Man exhorts us to acquire it: 'Get wisdom, get prudence; forget not, neither decline from the words of thy mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall keep thee: love her, and she shall preserve thee. The beginning of wisdom, get wisdom and with all thy possession purchase prudence. Take hold on her, and she shall exalt thee; thou shalt be glorified by her when thou shalt embrace her. She shall give to thy head increase of graces, and protect thee with a noble crown.'[3] Also, Our

[1] Homilia xii, Ad Populum. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 10. [3] Prov. iv. 5-9.

Lord seems to speak with equal urgency when he says to the Apostles: 'Be ye wise' (that is to say, prudent) 'as serpents.'[1] We need not, then, be surprised when we see the great masters of the spiritual life assigning to it a position so lofty among the other virtues, and speaking of it in terms which, at first sight, seem exaggerated.

Cassian relates that he heard the Abbot Moses say: 'When I was a child, I lived in the Thebaid where the blessed Anthony served the Lord'. On one occasion, some of the older Solitaries came to consult him about the best means to acquire perfection. In their conference with him, the chief question discussed was: 'What virtue, or what religious observance is best calculated to preserve Solitaries from the snares of the devil, and lead them most directly and most surely to the height of perfection?' Some said fasting and watching; others, privations, and the contempt of all that captivates the mind, and hinders it from raising itself to God; others, solitude, charity, and good works, to which Our Lord in the Gospel has specially promised the kingdom of heaven. At last the blessed Anthony spoke and said: 'All the means which you have mentioned are useful and necessary for those who thirst after God, and desire to reach him. But you have not mentioned the chief, the principal means. For I have seen men, who practised all the virtues which you have enumerated, fall suddenly into fatal illusions, and instead of ending their lives in fervour and in sanctity, perish miserably at last. What they needed was *discretion;* and because they had not that virtue, they did not persevere. They knew not that virtue which safely conducts men between the two extremes, and teaches them to avoid with equal care, either excess in fervour or laxity in observance under pretext of preserving their health.[2]

In effect, discretion is the law which must rule our thoughts, words, and works, if these are to be righteous and useful unto salvation; if it does not, then even virtue degenerates into vice. 'It is discretion that makes us

[1] St. Matt. x. 16. [2] Collat ii., Cap. ii.

direct everything to our last end, which is the glory of God and the salvation of our soul. It is discretion that chooses the best means to attain to that end, and makes us carry those means into effect. It is discretion that teaches us to foresee evils, and to protect ourselves against them; to avoid temptations; to shun occasions of sin; to make a good use of our time; to regulate our actions; to be wise at the expense of others; to avoid what might be fatal to us; and to embrace what is good. Therefore, if we wish to advance in perfection, we cannot do without it.'[1]

Its utility and its necessity will consequently make every good man desire to know by what means it may be acquired. These are:

1. To consider attentively the thing which has to be done, its object, end, and circumstances; to call to mind the circumstances of the past; to weigh attentively those of the present; and to foresee results; to guard against possible obstacles; to consult experienced men and useful books.

2. To deliberate maturely. Not to be in a hurry to judge; not to believe lightly, or rashly to settle any affair; not to answer without reflection, or to correct without discernment, or to love with partiality.

3. To have discernment; for we must distinguish sins from imperfections; mortal from venial sin; virtue from vice; a greater good from a lesser one; a sensible good from a spiritual good; carnal and sensitive love from spiritual consolations and sweetnesses.

4. We must make a choice; and in order that this choice may be good, we ought not to follow the inclination of corrupt nature; we should consider only the supernatural end for which we have been created, the will of God, and His greater glory; after we have in prayer asked Him to make known His good pleasure, we should be indifferent as to what He shall ask of us. When there is question of the choice of a state of life, we ought to compare the advantages which will result from such or such a position with the disadvantages which are likely to spring from it,

[1] Schram, Theolog. Myst., Tom. I., Cap. iii. Sect. 4.

and we should choose that state which we would have advised another to select if we had to give him our counsel, or which we should wish to have chosen when death shall have stricken us, and we are about to appear before our Judge.

5. We must execute what we have chosen. The carrying out of a good resolution ought not to be deferred without reason, nor should we either easily or lightly omit what we have resolved to do.[1]

He who to these means for acquiring discretion will add humility of heart will speedily gain possession of that much-to-be desired virtue, and having gained possession of it, he will hold in his hand the key of God's treasury, and he may enter and enrich himself with all those virtues the sum total of which is perfection.

All that has been said in these introductory remarks may be summed up thus: Each man has in life an ultimate aim or end, which he obtains by means of a subordinate aim. The ultimate aim of the religious man is the possession of God in the kingdom of heaven; his subordinate aim is the perfection of charity. This perfection may be said to be made up of three elements: of charity, or the love of God above all things; of purity of heart, or detachment from all that is not God; and of humility. The implements or instruments by which a man is helped to obtain the perfection of charity are manifold and various. The chief are as follow: (1) prayer; (2) the grace of God; (3) attention to the internal operations of the Holy Spirit, and docility to His guidance; (4) imitation of Jesus Christ; (5) renunciation, in its three branches—obedience, poverty, and chastity.

The main spring, which sets in motion this spiritual mechanism, is the fear of God, the outcome of which is sorrow for past sin, compunction, and zeal to do the will of God. This last makes the soul advance in perfection, and by advancing in perfection it casts out vices and plants virtues in their stead. Finally, the result of all this is a peace of mind and heart which surpasses all understanding, and keeps the soul of the religious man in Christ Jesus.

[1] Schram, Theolog. Myst. *ut supra*.

# CHAPTER II.

## *PERFECTION.*

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## SECTION I.

### DEFINITION AND DIVISION OF PERFECTION.

ARISTOTLE defines perfection to be, 'that to which nothing is wanting.'[1] Therefore, no created being, can be said to be perfect in this absolute sense; for only God possesses all things, and He is said by the Psalmist to be God precisely because He needs nothing. But there is another sense in which we may say that any given thing is perfect, and that is when it has all the qualities requisite to secure the end or purpose for which it is made. Thus, a clock or a painting is perfect when each of them fulfils the purpose for which it is intended. If the picture reproduces before the eye the scene or the incident which it is meant to depict, and the clock keeps accurate time, each of them is perfect in its way, because each accomplishes the purpose for which it was made. Yet, although we call these things perfect, we do not thereby mean to say that a higher degree of perfection is not attainable in the production of even precisely similar articles, destined to fulfil the same end. There are paintings and paintings, and there are clocks and clocks; a picture meant to adorn the walls of some lofty building, and consequently intended to be seen at a great distance, has not all the delicate finish of a miniature which may be taken into the hand and examined with a powerful glass; nor is there requisite for a kitchen

[1] Metaph., Lib. v., Cap. 16.

clock the same complicated mechanism or the same choice material that is needed for the construction of a chronometer, upon the unfailing accuracy of which the nicest astronomical calculations depend. Therefore, not only there is a perfection which is absolute and unapproachable, but there is a perfection which is relative, and which consequently admits of more and of less, in which there are grades or degrees corresponding to the object or end to be attained.

Now, although the end of each of us is the same—being the possession of God in eternal glory—yet each of us will not possess Him in the same degree. One man will more intimately know Him than another, will have a fuller grasp of His nature and of His attributes; and consequently will have a greater capacity for loving Him, and for joying in His entrancing beauty. This capacity of enjoying God and this grasp of His attributes, and this intimate knowledge of Him, are the consequences and the rewards of that degree of perfection to which a man shall have attained during this present life. Of this fact there can be no doubt, for, God's rewards are proportioned to a man's work. If God bestows five talents, and a man by his good husbandry makes them produce other five, he is set by God as ruler over five cities; if he receives but two talents, and makes them fructify in equal proportion, he is set over two cities. He dwells in one of those many mansions which are in the kingdom of the common Father, and the glory which will be his reward differs from the glory with which one of his fellow-workmen is crowned, just as much as one star differs from another in the brilliancy of its light. From these facts we may conclude that God does not expect the same degree of perfection from all. He does not require one whose days are spent in commerce, and who has to rear and educate and govern a large family, to have the same degree of perfection that the monk must have whose life is passed in the tranquillity of the cloister. A statesman will not be expected by Him to be so holy as a Bishop, or a layman to be so holy as a priest. Provided

that each strives, by the aid of God's grace, faithfully to fulfil the duties of that station in which God has placed him, ever keeping in view the grand ultimate end of his existence, and turning all his energies to attain it, that man, we maintain, is perfect; for nothing is wanting to him for the attainment of the purpose for which God created him.

Of course, we do not mean to say that he is perfect in the sense in which we say that a man is perfect who has actually attained his end; and therefore we must be careful to notice, that there are various senses in which the word *perfect* may be applied to any given class of men. Those who are still struggling successfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil, are said to have 'the perfection of the way,' or that perfection which it is possible for men to have who are travelling onwards towards their true country. As soon as they have closed their eyes in death, and, having been purged from every stain, have received their crown from the hands of the just Judge, they will be in possession of that absolute perfection which is called the perfection of one's true country. This is the portion of those who have reached their eternal home in the bosom of God. Also, there is a perfection which is said to be *permanent*, consisting in a high degree of sanctity and of habitual grace; and another, *operative* or actual, which manifests itself by signal acts of virtue. Again, perfection is called *personal* when it is found in any given individual, and *regular*, when it is attached to the exact and full accomplishment of all the rules and the statutes belonging to the religious state of life. Personal perfection is inseparable from regular perfection, except, perhaps, in the case of one who, though perfect in every other respect, yet happens to fail through inadvertence, or through frailty, in some rule which does not oblige under penalty of sin; moreover, *regular* perfection is one of the chief and infallible signs of personal perfection, unless it is exercised in acts of only little importance, and in cases in which the obligation itself is not grave.

Hence we conclude that *regular* perfection is intimately connected with personal perfection; and, when it does not suppose personal perfection to be already existing in any given man, the acts which are the result of it are only temporary, and they have no connection except with external perfection, that is to say, with the simple external observance of rule. Moreover, perfection may be divided into *essential*, consisting in the observance of the precepts, and into *accidental*—or that which, besides observing the precepts, practises the counsels also. The first is found in beginners, and in those who have made some progress; the second in those who, being purified from sins and passions, and enlightened by the practice of virtues, unite themselves by charity to God, and detach themselves from all created things, in order, by a very pure intention, to attach themselves to God, both in prosperity and in adversity. These are the perfect properly so called. They are not only just, but perfect; and perfect not merely in a certain degree, but in that special degree which is the highest possible of attainment in this life. Hence, there is as much difference between their state and that of the imperfect, as there is between the condition of a child and that of a fully developed man; between a fruit tree in the early spring and that same tree bending beneath its golden load in the declining days of autumn.

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## SECTION II.

### ABSOLUTE PERFECTION IS NOT ATTAINABLE.

As we have already said that the absolute perfection attainable by man cannot be reached by him during this present life, we must now show still more clearly that this statement is true. If any man could have been perfect in this sense, it would, without doubt, have been the great Apostle St. Paul. He had from his youth been filled with a zeal for perfection—such as he conceived it to be—which

well-nigh bordered upon fanaticism. Following out the dictates of his conscience, he had come into sharp conflict with Our Lord's disciples, who to him seemed bent upon the subversion of the grand old dispensation received from God amid the lightning flash and the thunder roll of Sinai. He therefore opposed them with all the fiery vehemence of his energetic character, and persecuted them with relentless fury. On his way to Damascus to deliver up to death whomsoever he could find in that city, following the teaching of the new faith, he was met face to face, by Jesus Christ in His glory. He was converted by Him, and taught by Him. He was caught up into heaven, where such revelations were made unto him of divine things as it is not given to human tongue to utter. Yet, even this vessel of election, so favoured of God, could not say of himself that he was perfect: 'I speak to you thus,' he writes to the Philippians, 'not as if I had already attained, or as if I were already perfect, but I follow after' (it), 'if I may by any means apprehend it.'[1] But if St. Paul could not be perfect with that absolute perfection which will be ours only in heaven, how can we hope to attain it, while grovelling in the mire of this earth? The same Apostle intimates that this is impossible, when he points out that perfection such as this will be ours only in the life to come: 'But when that which is perfect shall have come, that which is in part shall be done away;' and our state will then be as much superior to our present condition as the state of manhood is to that of childhood.[2] The reason of this is manifest from the mere fact of our being at present only on the way to that future state. For while on the way, we tend incessantly to acquire new merits, by striving to become more and more just and holy; whereas when we come to the term, or to everlasting life, which is an immutable state, we are no longer, susceptible of change, of increase, or of advance, but we have attained the highest degree that it is possible for us to reach.

[1] Philip. iii. 12. [2] 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

A further reason must be drawn from the fact that perfection consists principally in the love of God. Now the precept which commands this cannot be accomplished with absolute perfection except in heaven. For the perfection of that love must be looked at with respect to its absolute totality on the part of him who loves. That is to say, the love which is in him must induce him, as far as in him lies, *always* to produce acts of the love of God. To do this, however, is not possible in the present life, but only in the life to come; for in the present life it is impossible for us *always* to be thinking actually of God, and *always* to be feeling the movements of His love.[1] Besides, the propensity to sin is always smouldering in our hearts, and it is completely extinguished only by death. It has, therefore, to be watched with all care and kept under, lest it should at any time break forth into a new conflagration, and utterly consume us in its devouring flames. Also another reason which proves how futile would be the attempt to win this absolute perfection for ourselves while we are here below is that without a special privilege of God, no one is able to avoid all, even the slightest venial sins; and therefore, there will always be adhering to us some imperfection, which will render the attainment of absolute perfection altogether impossible.

> 'For no perfection' (human) 'is so absolute,
> That some impurity doth not pollute.'[2]

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## SECTION III.

### RELATIVE PERFECTION IS ATTAINABLE.

BUT although such perfection as this is at present beyond our reach, yet that relative perfection compatible with our human infirmities, may be won by the aid of divine grace. This perfection, as we have already observed, consists in the close union of our hearts with God, after they have been

[1] St Thomas, II., ii., q. 184, a. 2. [2] Shakespeare, Poems.

first purified from sins and defects, enlightened by virtues, and set on fire by the love of God. Perfection such as this, is within reach of us all. For if it were beyond our reach, God, Who never commands impossibilities, would not have ordered us to aspire to it. But He has done so, in numberless passages of Holy Writ, as when He spoke to the Jewish people in the desert, and said: 'Thou shalt be perfect and without spot before the Lord thy God;'[1] and to Abraham: 'Walk before Me and be perfect.'[2] Also Our Lord said to the crowds who listened to Him: 'Be you perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect;'[3] and to the young man who wished to follow Him: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me.'[4] When we read the inspired Volume, passages such as these meet our eye at almost every page; and not only do they impose upon us the command to be perfect, but they hold up for our veneration and imitation men and women, weak as ourselves, who have been perfect, and who are, therefore, excellent models of that sanctity which it urges us to acquire. Also, the Church puts forward her Saints for the same reason, 'in order that, having so great a cloud of witnesses over our head, we may run by patience to the fight proposed to us.'[5] Now, what is there to hinder us from doing what they have done? Nothing of so great weight and force but that courage and perseverance, aided by God's grace, can sweep aside. For a man thus upheld by power superior to his own and to all the power that the devil can marshal against him, will be able to live while on earth a life of well-nigh spotless purity. His soul cleansed from stain, will, by degrees, acquire the great cardinal virtues, upon which perfection turns as a door turns upon its hinges. These virtues, in process of time, will become so perfect in him, that his prudence will look only to heavenly things; his temperance will ignore all earthly desires; his fortitude will be exempt from all passion; and his

[1] Deut. xviii. 13. [2] Gen. xvii. 1. [3] St. Matt. v. 48.
[4] *Idem.* xix. 21. [5] Heb. xii. 1.

justice will unite itself to the Divinity by always imitating it.[1] Moreover, the precept of charity, 'which is the bond of perfection,' may be accomplished with respect to God and to our neighbour, to the full extent of its requirements; for in as far, at least, as the exigencies of life will permit us, we can give ourselves entirely to God, to the exclusion of everything else. This is the only perfection of charity possible here below.

With respect to our neighbour, we may in a perfect manner exercise the precept of love, by giving up our life for his sake, 'greater love than this no man hath.'[2] If, then, it is true that the heroism of virtue may be acquired here below, as is proved by the lives of so many Saints, both under the Old and under the New Dispensation; if it is true that by mortification we can so far conquer our passions as to hinder their irregular motions; if it is beyond dispute that, except on rare occasions, we are able to avoid all deliberate venial sins, though we may not be able to avoid those which are indeliberate; finally, if it is certain that we may attain the beginning, at least, of happiness, though we may be unable to win for ourselves that happiness which is absolute—then it is also true, and beyond dispute, that the perfection of which we speak may be acquired in this world, because it consists in the virtues just enumerated.

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## SECTION IV.

### ALL MEN ARE BOUND TO AIM AT RELATIVE PERFECTION.

But here there will naturally suggest itself a question which requires an immediate answer. Are all men bound to strive after relative perfection? We reply unhesitatingly that there cannot be any doubt about it. All are obliged to aim at that perfection which in their state of life it is possible for them to attain here below. St. Paul is inculcating

[1] St. Thomas, I., ii., q. 61, a. 5. [2] St. John xv. 13.

this upon the Ephesians when he tells them that 'God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be *holy and unspotted* in His sight in charity.'[1] St. Peter puts forward this obligation in still more formal terms when he bids all the faithful generally: 'Be holy in all manner of conversation, as children of obedience, fashioned after the model of Him Who has called you, for it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.'[2] By holiness the Apostles mean perfection, and from other passages of the Sacred Text we find that they are not speaking vaguely of a general sort of goodness, but of that which, in the strictest sense of the word, is perfection. For from the ordinary faithful they require virtues which imply a high degree of sanctity. 'Love not the world,' says St. John, 'nor the things that are in the world.'[3] St. Paul, speaking to the married says, 'Let those who have wives, be as if they had them not, and use this world as if they used it not.'[4] Our Lord, addressing the crowds who listened to His teaching, said to all generally: 'If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.'[5] In these and in similar passages, no distinction whatever is made between Clerics and Laics. Therefore, all, without exception, ought to aim at the highest degree to which they can attain. For have not all who have been born again by baptism promised most solemnly to renounce the devil, and all his works, and all his pomps? How can this be done unless they continually strive after perfection? How can they pretend to be Christians, unles they live in the world without being of the world, unless they are ready to sacrifice everything rather than lose God? Are they not obliged patiently to bear their cross, to pardon their enemies, to renounce the spirit of pride, of concupiscence, and of self-love, in order to put off the old man, and to clothe themselves with the new, by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ? But it is precisely by

[1] Ephes. i. 4. [2] 1 St. Pet. i. 15. [3] 1 St. John ii. 15.
[4] 1 Cor. vii. 29. [5] St. Luke xiv. 26.

these very acts that men are said to tend to perfection; and, therefore, it is evident that all are bound to aim at it, and to use every effort and to employ every means which will secure its attainment.

In what, then, it may be asked, consists the difference between the Religious and the ordinary Christian living in the world? If both are bound to tend to perfection, then the Religious might attain to the perfection which he seeks in the cloister just as well by staying in the world and fulfilling the ordinary duties of life. The difference between the Religious and the ordinary Christian living in the world consists in *renunciation*, as we remarked in the preceding chapter; that is to say, that whereas, on the one hand, the Religous applies himself in a more *special way* to the attainment of perfection, and of his own free-will obliges himself to observe certain evangelical counsels by *abandoning*, as far as in him lies, everything that belongs to the world, the ordinary Christian, on the other hand, although obliged by his baptismal vow to tend to perfection, yet does not in *reality* abandon the world, he only withholds his affections from the things of the world, and he is ready to lose all these in *reality* rather than lose God. Such dispositions as these, however, can be acquired only by the mortification of the passions, by contempt of the world and of its pomps—in one word, by the acquisition of all the evangelical virtues.

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## SECTION V.

### RELIGIOUS ARE BOUND TO TEND TO PERFECTION.

Now at first sight it may seem but reasonable to expect that if the ordinary Christian is bound to tend to perfection, though living amid the cares and the troubles of the world, the Religious who is free from all the distracting thoughts that necessarily accompany a life of this nature, should actually *be* perfect. No such obligation, however,

rests upon him. Like all other men, he is simply obliged to *tend* to perfection. The authorities already adduced to show that all are thus bound apply, however, with far more reason to the Religious than they do to the Laic, upon the principle that more is to be expected from him unto whom more has been intrusted. A little reasoning will show us more clearly still why it is that the obligation of being actually perfect is not imposed upon him. Perfection, as we have seen, consists in man's complete adhesion to God by means of charity. Now, it is the aim of the Religious State to attain to this union with God, and, therefore, the life of anyone who embraces such a state is nothing more or less than a method or discipline by which he strives to arrive at the end proposed; and this he endeavours to do by different kinds of exercises, just as a physician, by the application of various remedies, endeavours to obtain his patient's complete restoration to health. Now it is quite clear to everyone that when any man is working *towards* a given end, it is not expected that he should actually have gained that end; all that is looked for is that he should be *tending* towards the attainment of it. So also is it with the Religious. He is not bound actually to have attained the perfection of charity, but he is obliged to tend towards the acquisition of it, and to employ the means necessary for its attainment. But with respect to even those various means by which perfection is acquired, he is not obliged to use them all, but only those marked out for him by the Rule which he professes to follow.[1]

It is in this sense that we must understand, all such expressions of the Fathers as at first sight would lead us to suppose that actual perfection is required from everyone that has embraced the Religious State. Thus, when St. Jerome says: 'It is a sin for a monk not to wish *to be perfect*;'[2] and Eusebius: 'It is the height of damnation not to live perfectly in Religion,'[3] they are speaking

[1] St. Thomas, II., ii., q. 186 a 2. [2] Epist. XIV., No. 7.
[3] Homil. IV., De Epiphania.

simply of the will to *tend* towards perfection. St. Bernard's well-known words do not mean any more than this. They express in a rhetorical way only what St. Thomas has said with philosophical accuracy: 'Oh monk!' he says, 'will you not go forward? No. Do you wish, then, to go back? No. What, then, do you wish to do? I wish to live as I am; to remain where I am; I do not wish to become worse; I do not desire to become better. You wish, then, for that which is impossible! No one can be stationary here below!'[1]

The very definition usually given of the Religious State will serve to corroborate all that has been said. It is called 'a permanent state of common life, approved by the Church for those of the faithful who wish to *tend to perfection*, by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.' Therefore the perfection special to Religious, not only necessitates the complete observance of the precept of charity which they must obey in common with all other Christians, but requires from them fidelity to the vows and to all that has a necessary connection with them. For although there is no precept binding us to take these vows, but only a counsel urging us to do so, in order with greater facility to obtain charity and to obtain it in greater perfection, yet when once they have been taken, they impose upon him who takes them an obligation equal to that springing from the precepts themselves. Moreover, as they are the means or instruments put into his hands to gain an end, the Religious not only is bound to make use of them, but is obliged to aim at that measure of perfection, which they are intended to procure for him as his subordinate end. But these vows, as well as the other grave obligations constituting so large a part of regular discipline, will serve to conduct him to his end, only when they are, so to speak, instinct with internal life, and associated with internal acts of virtue. Nothing else will enable him to satisfy the obligation of his profession. He may bear the name and wear the habit of a Religious,

[1] Epist. 253.

but unless he seriously applies himself to the practice of the evangelical virtues, he is nothing more than the simulacrum of a Religious. Hence, it is not a matter of mere counsel that he should labour to acquire perfection; it is a matter of the most strict and rigorous obligation.

Furthermore, the Religious is bound to tend to perfection not only by fidelity to his vows and to the grave precepts of his State, but by the observance of those counsels and rules which do not bind under sin. How incongruous would it otherwise be for him to call himself a *Regular*, or one who lives according to *Rule*, if he did not observe those which his State imposes upon him? But setting aside the incongruity of the matter, a much more weighty and telling argument may be found for urging the necessity for observing these minor obligations and rules, in the very nature of these rules themselves. They are the cords which bind together the three great vows; they constitute the very bones and sinews of the Religious body. They may be likened to the chain of outworks which enfold within their protecting circle some important fortress, and render either surprise or capture morally impossible; they constitute the rungs of the ladder by which a Religious ascends to the kingdom of God; they are the base or foundation of the spiritual edifice; they are as a mirror in which the Religious may see whether he is beautiful or deformed, just or unjust, faithful or unfaithful, pleasing to God or displeasing to Him. Consequently, a Religious is bound to observe them; for, if he does not do so, he is not seeking for, he is not tending to perfection. For, how can he be said to be doing so, if he bursts asunder the bonds which hold his vows together? How can he be aiming at the spiritual health of that body of which he is a member, if he breaks its bones and tears asunder its sinews? Can that man be said to care for the defence of the citadel, who betrays its outworks to the enemy? Or can he be said to desire the kingdom of God, who breaks down the steps by which he must, perforce, ascend to it? or uproots the very

foundations on which the spiritual edifice is built? Most certainly not! Hence, a Religious must observe his rules if he desires to fulfil the obligation of tending to perfection. He must quit himself well of the exercises and the works ordered by his State. He must faithfully and zealously accomplish his daily duties, such as the Divine Office, meditation, examination of conscience, spiritual reading, and the rest. The source of the zeal which will lead him to do this is to be found in the love of God, and in the real possession of virtue.[1]

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## SECTION VI.

### WHEN AND HOW RELIGIOUS SIN BY NOT TENDING TO PERFECTION.[2]

If then, there is an obligation binding every religious man to tend to perfection, you will very naturally ask; 'When does he sin mortally against this obligation by not tending to perfection?' We answer that a Religious sins mortally against the obligation of tending to perfection when he neglects, *out of contempt*, all the counsels, means, or rules of his State, and all that would lead him to perfection; for although these bind him only under a slight obligation, or under none at all, yet to omit them, '*out of contempt*,' is a mortal sin. 'But,' says St. Thomas, 'the omission of all this is the result of contempt when it is the *will* that refuses to submit to the order of the Law or of the Rule, and out of contempt acts against the Law or against the Rule. But if Religious fail, in point of Rule, through concupiscence, or through anger, or through any similar motive, it is evident that their transgression is not the result of contempt, even though the transgression is oftentimes repeated through the same motive.'[3]

[1] See Rodriguez, Pract. of Christian Perf., Vol. i., Treat. 1, 2.

[2] For the teaching of St. Alphonsus upon this question, see Appendix, Chapter II., No. 2.

[3] St. Thomas, II., ii., q. 186, a. 9, ad. 3.

Again, he sins mortally when he trangresses Rule in order to hinder his perfection, for in that case there is no doubt whatever that he does not wish to tend to perfection.

Also, when he firmly resolves not to care about his perfection, and to remain in a low degree; for he is bound always to tend to perfection, and never to halt upon the way which leads to it.

He sins mortally against his obligation when he takes no care whatever to avoid venial sins, and when he ceases to apply himself to the practice of mortification, with danger of greatly falling away.

Also, when, for a notable time, he in no way endeavours to acquire virtues, and cares very little for the acquisition of them.

Finally, when he quits himself through mere routine, without fervour and without fruit, of everything that would lead him to perfection—such as meditation, examination of conscience, spiritual reading, and works of obedience; or when he altogether omits them; for it is impossible by conduct such as this to comply with the obligation of tending to perfection.

A further question now presents itself; it is this: 'Does a Religious sin mortally against this obligation when he wishes to comply with only that unto which his vows and his other grave obligations bind him under penalty of mortal sin, but habitually transgresses the Rule, and the Constitutions in those points, which do not bind under any such penalty? Or, again, when he resolves to fulfil only those duties which bind under pain of mortal sin, without troubling himself about the rest, or with a will altogether to omit them? There are some grave theologians, such as Suarez, Sanchez, and the Doctors of Salamanca, who maintain that a Religious so disposed would not sin mortally. But with the weight of authority arrayed on the opposite side, many authors feel compelled to maintain that in both cases the Religious would sin mortally. St. Thomas says that the Religious sins who takes no pains to advance in perfection by the means with

which his rules and constitutions furnish him. For this he does not require that the Religious should act out of formal contempt, since it is one thing to contemn the means of perfection and quite another thing to transgress them 'out of contempt.' But he who neglects the means which his Rule puts into his hands contemns them; for habitual transgression is an unmistakable sign of the small account which we make of anything.[1] The Council of Trent orders Religious, both men and women, to fashion their lives upon the Rule of which they make profession. In a special manner it bids them observe faithfully all those things which will lead them to the perfection of their State, such as obedience, poverty, chastity, the particular vows of each Order, and whatever helps to preserve intact the rules; common life, frugality, and simplicity of dress.[2] But it is a grievous transgression of an important precept to be willing to observe only those statutes which bind under pain of mortal sin. Denis, the Carthusian, after enumerating the venial faults against a rule, adds: 'To fail in the observance of Rule, and to persevere in that failure without caring to correct one's self, cannot be excused from the guilt of mortal sin. The whole life of a Religious who should act thus would be a continual sin.'[3] Even theologians who excuse from sin those Religious who act in this manner, are forced to admit this. Suarez confesses that, morally speaking, it is difficult for a Religious to seek his salvation as he ought without either entirely or in part keeping the rules which are not imposed upon him under pain of grave sin, and which he has not promised to observe[4]. Finally, even the Doctors of Salamanca observe that this Religious may commit a mortal sin if he does not efficaciously seek the means to correct his bad habits, when, in consequence of his licentious and irregular life, considerable damage may be caused to himself or to his Order; for then he wounds

[1] St. Thomas, II., ii., q. 186, a. 2, 3, 4.
[2] Council. Trident., Sect. XXV., c. i., De Regular.
[3] De Refor. Claust., Art. VI.
[4] De Relig., Tom. IV.; Tract. VIII., Lib. I., c. iv., No. 12.

regular discipline, because by his bad example, and by his continual violation of Rule, he induces others to commit sin. Moreover, he makes himself useless to his Order by depriving it of the advantages which it hoped to reap from him, and by giving countenance to those evil and lax customs which are so pernicious to spiritual progress. In short, he exposes himself to the probable, and oftentimes to the actual peril of transgressing the vows and grave precepts, and of coming at last to formal contempt.[1] 'In effect,' says St. Thomas, commenting on these words of the Proverbs, 'the impious, when he cometh into the abyss of sin, contemneth,' a multiplicity of sins is a disposing cause to contempt. That Religious, therefore, may with reason fear that he may come at last to such a state as to deserve ejection from his Order as an incorrigible, and as a disturber of the common weal. This he is bound to avoid under penalty of a mortal sin.'[2] Therefore we are right in maintaining that the Religious who is in such dispositions as those described in the case proposed, would incur the guilt of a mortal sin. It must not, however, be supposed that the sin of a Religious will straightway be mortal, when, in consequence of a bad habit, he transgresses, in matters of little moment, some rules, the violation of which will somewhat retard his perfection. Nor will his violation of any given precept, which does not bind under a grave penalty, be mortal if, though offending against it, he at the same time faithfully observe the rest. In fact, fidelity to the other points of the Rule may yet lead him to perfection. Such transgressions of Rule are, nevertheless, rarely without some sin, because the origin of them may always be traced to lukewarmness, negligence, concupiscence, and self-love. Lastly, although every habit of transgression, accompanied by the desire of amendment, is neither formal nor interpretative contempt, yet it disposes thereunto; and if it is excessive, and if it is not corrected, it betrays real interpretative contempt. The desire of amendment is then delusive, and is a desire only in name.

[1] T. Salmantic, Tom. IV; Tract. XV., c. i. [2] St. Thomas, *in loco cit.*

## SECTION VII.

### ECCLESIASTICS ARE BOUND TO TEND TO PERFECTION.

If laymen and Religious are bound to *tend* to a perfection corresponding to their respective States of life, and to the graces which they receive, we may conclude with good reason that Ecclesiastics are bound to aspire and to tend to a much higher degree than are either laymen or Religious. Speaking of Bishops, St. Thomas teaches that they ought to be in a state of perfection far superior to that of Religious, not only because they themselves are obliged to tend to it, but because, as teachers, they should make others advance therein by themselves applying to it. In another place he uses the same reasoning with regard to parish priests who exercise acts of perfection by feeding the sheep confided to their care. In comparing secular Ecclesiastics with Religious, he says that the State of the latter is less perfect than is that of the Prelates of the Church; and that the character of a Prelate, or of a Bishop, or of a parish priest, demands more sanctity than does the Religious Profession.[1] Making a distinction between different kinds of perfection, he mentions the perfection of *excellence of life*, to which he maintains that Clerics are more strictly obliged than laymen.[2] From the decree of the Council of Trent, we can see that on this point the sentiments of the Church are in unison with those of the Angelical: 'For the government of the Church,' it says, 'which is a burden to be dreaded even by the shoulders of Angels, let only such persons be chosen as are most worthy, and in whose favour a good testimony is given by a spotless life, spent from early childhood to mature age in all the exercises of ecclesiastical discipline.'[3] Speaking of Ecclesiastics of an inferior grade, it says: 'It is becoming that Clerics who are called unto the inheritance of the

[1] St. Thomas, II., ii., q. 184, a. 5. [2] Opuscula, XVIII.
[3] Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., De Reform., c. i.

Lord should so order their lives and manners that their dress, their gestures, their gait, their words, and all their actions, may show forth gravity, modesty, and a spirit of religious decorum; they should avoid slight faults, which in their case are grave; and their actions should inspire all men with respect.'[1] It requires from all Prelates and beneficed clergymen modesty, simplicity, frugality, zeal in the service of God, contempt of vanities, renunciation of all fleshy affections which might induce them to enrich their relatives with the goods of the Church.[2]

Bishops ought to manifest their perfection by brilliant acts of virtue, and for this reason they are bound *to be perfect* when they come to the Episcopate, and daily to advance still more in the way of perfection, in order that in the exercise of their holy office they may be able by skilful administration, and by an example full of wisdom, to make those who are committed to their care live in a manner worthy of their calling. In the same way inferior Prelates, parish priests, and even those who have not the care of souls, are bound to be in a state of perfection, inferior, indeed, to that of Bishops, but proportioned to the functions which they perform. For their office of consecrating the Body and the Blood of the Lord, and the duties attached to that office, oblige them to a greater purity of heart than is that which is looked for from ordinary Christian laymen. Moreover, their position in the Church imposes upon them the duty of labouring for the salvation of their neighbour. This obligation of being in a state of perfection corresponding to the position which a person holds will, therefore, become more stringent as he advances upwards in the hierarchy of the Church; it will require less perfection from one who has received only the tonsure; more from him who is in Minor Orders; and this perfection will go on increasing, till at last, when the Cleric reaches the Episcopate, if he ever does reach it, he must be perfect, according to that saying of St. Paul: 'It behoveth a Bishop to be blameless.'[3]

[1] *Ibid.*, Sess. XXII., c. i. [2] *Ibid.*, Sess. XXIV. c. [3] 1 Tim. iii.

But before a secular Ecclesiastic can even aim at the perfection of his State, he is supposed to have, and he must actually have, three things: first, he must, as far as human prudence can determine, have a divine call to the Ecclesiastical State; for if he have not this, he will imperil both his own salvation and the salvation of those who may be intrusted to his care, inasmuch as he is in an office for which he is not fitted. Hence that saying of St. Paul: 'Neither doth any man take this honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was.'[1] Secondly, he must have purity of intention in entering the Ecclesiastical State: 'He that doth not enter the sheepfold by the gate is a thief and a robber.' The true shepherd always enters by the gate. To become a priest either through ambition or through love of gain is considered by the Roman Catechism to be a frightful sacrilege, deserving all those terrible invectives launched against hirelings by St. Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Great, and St. Bernard. Thirdly, he must have sanctity of life. It is not sufficient that a priest should not be leading a scandalous life; if he is not exemplary, he is gravely imperilling his own eternal salvation. In order to be in this dangerous state it is not requisite that the priest should have the care of souls; it is sufficient that he is a priest; nay, it is sufficient that he is in Orders, for then he is bound to help in the salvation of souls, by his care, by his example, and by his prayers.

[1] Heb. v. 4.

# CHAPTER III.

## *CHARITY.*

## SECTION I.

### THE LOVE OF GOD.

HAVING in the preceding chapter treated of perfection in general, and of the obligation which binds the layman, the Religious, and the Ecclesiastic to tend to it, we come now to examine into the various elements of which it may be said to be composed. These elements, as we have already seen, are charity, purity of heart, and humility. As we have to deal separately with each of these, let us devote the present chapter to the consideration of charity, first with respect to God, and secondly with respect to our neighbour.

Theologians define it to be: 'A divinely infused theological virtue, which makes us love God above all things, and our neighbour and created things for God's sake.' For the better understanding of this definition, observe that charity is called a *virtue*, because it makes men good and the friends of God; a *theological virtue*, because more than any other, it has reference to God; a virtue *infused* by God, because 'the charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Who is given to us;'[1] a virtue whereby *we love God above all things*, that is to say, all created things; and these last *for God's sake*, because the possessions of a friend are always to be used for his advantage. Charity, therefore, being so comprehensive in

[1] Rom. v. 5.

its nature, may be looked at from various points of view. When we love anyone for his own sake, because he is upright, honourable, and generous, our love is called the love of *benevolence*. But if we love him, not for his own sake, but because he is pleasing, or is useful to us, or because he has done us some signal service, our love is then said to be the love of *concupiscence*, because we love him for our own sake. Besides looking at charity in this way, or as it is in itself, we may also regard it with respect to the object towards which it is directed, and then it resolves itself into the love of God, and of our neighbour, who is loved for God's sake. Furthermore, charity may be looked at, inasmuch as it may exist in a greater or in a less degree, in any given person; for we may love one person more than another in one of these three ways; by wishing him more good, and then our love is said to be *objectively* greater; by holding him in higher esteem, which love is called the love of *appreciation;* by loving him with greater vehemence and having our heart more fully occupied with his love, and then our love is said to be *intensively* greater for him than it is for anyone else.

The primary object towards which our love must be directed is God; for, by His own express command, we are bound to love Him: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart: this is the greatest and the first commandment.'[1] In the next place we must love ourselves, and our neighbour; for it is of the nature of perfect friendship to love not only him whose friends we are, but also those who have any relationship with him, as we and our fellow-men have—since we are intellectual beings capable of beatitude. The motive which should urge us to love God ought not to be any with which self is mixed up. He should be loved for His own sake, because He is infinite goodness, the root and source of all perfection. Hence the charity with which we love God is the love of benevolence, and this love must be supreme, that is to say, it must surpass our love of all other things whatever.

[1] St. Matt. xxii. 38.

Nevertheless, though our love of God should be supreme, it is not requisite that it should be supreme in *intensity*, but only in *appreciation*. It is desirable, indeed, that the heart should love Him with this intensity; but yet this does not come under the precept by which we are bound to love Him, both because it is not always in our power, and because, though such intensity of love is the perfection of charity, yet it is nothing more than an accidental perfection, consisting in a certain vehemence and effort of the affections. Therefore, because we feel more sensible affection for our parents, or for our friends, than we do for God, and because we are stricken with more sorrow by the loss of them than we are by the loss of God's grace, we must not think that we care less for Him, and love Him less than we love them; provided only that our will is attached to God, and that we are ready for His sake to sacrifice all things, and to endure all things, rather than lose His friendship by sin, our love is all that He desires it to be. It is appreciatively supreme, though it is not at the same time intensively supreme. But while maintaining that we should love God for His own sake only, or with what is called the love of benevolence, we do not for a moment wish ourselves to be understood as saying that we may not love Him with the love of concupiscence also, or with that love which induces us to love Him because He is infinitely good to us, and because He purposes to reward us with transcendent happiness in His heavenly kingdom.

To forbid men to love God in this way, and for such motives as these, would be to fall into the errors of Michael Molinos, a Spanish priest who, in the seventeenth century, taught, among other things equally false, that he who loves God should never think of reward or of punishment, of heaven or of hell, of death or of eternity, but should conform himself entirely to the divine will, committing to God the care of all things, so as to make no account of the temptations of the devil, or to trouble himself about resisting them, and thus, without effort, to suffer God to do His will in him. This system is called *Quietism*, or false

mysticism. It is opposed to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, which bid us 'Seek first the kingdom of God,'[1] which phrase means nothing else than to love and desire God, because He is good to us. Our Lord bids us pray to His Father, saying, 'Thy kingdom come,' and when speaking to His Apostles, He tells them expressly 'to rejoice and be glad, because their reward is very great in heaven.'[2] Now if it were an evil thing to desire a reward in heaven, which is really the possession of God, Christ would never have proposed it to us as an object of our desires. David, in the Psalm, says that he made his heart observe the commandments of God 'for the sake of the reward'[3] which should be given to him. 'O, man!' says St. Austin, 'if thou dost waver in thy purpose, be firm in the sure hope of reward.'[4] Finally, the Council of Trent settles the whole question by saying: 'If anyone shall say that the just man sins, when, in view of reward, he performs any good action, let him be anathema.'[5]

Deservedly, therefore, were the propositions on which Molinos built his system condemned, in 1686, by Pope Innocent XI. Four years later, Alexander VIII. condemned this proposition: 'The intention whereby anyone detests evil and pursues good, merely to obtain heavenly glory, is neither right nor pleasing to God.' Nor is there anything inordinate in thus loving and serving God for the sake of his rewards; for by this love God is not referred to us as to a last end, but rather we refer ourselves to Him, since we desire Him for ourselves, because He is our last end, and, having obtained Him, our soul desires nothing more. Moreover, to love God with the love of concupiscence is not in any way opposed to the perfection of charity, as the illustrious Fénélon seemed to think. This amiable and venerated Prelate, who was as tenderly loved for his unaffected piety as he was deeply respected for his profound learning, though not considering the love of

[1] St. Matt. vi. 33. [2] St. Matt. v. 12. [3] Ps. cxviii. 112.
[4] Serm., 345. [5] Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., c. xxxi.

concupiscence evil and hurtful, as Molinos did, yet taught that theological charity, in order to be pure and perfect, ought to reach so great a degree of love as no longer to have any desire of salvation mixed up with it. For this he was attacked by Bossuet with a degree of virulence which does little credit to the Eagle of Meaux, though his vehement denunciation of what was supposed to be a tendency to Quietism, while exposing still more the fallacy of the system, served only to bring out into bold relief the gentleness, the modesty, and the deep humility of the great Archbishop of Cambrai.

The Semi-Quietism towards which Fénélon was supposed to lean is refuted by the same arguments by which the error is refuted from which it sprang, and of which it is but a modification. For if, in accordance with the precept of Our Lord, we ought 'first to seek the kingdom of God and His justice,' and if we are taught to say 'Thy kingdom come,' then the love of concupiscence is not, and it cannot be, opposed to perfect charity. Again; charity, according to the common definition, is a virtue infused by God, whereby we love Him for His own sake above all things, and all other things for His sake. Therefore, charity does not exclude the love of other things, and especially of our own beatitude, provided that this is referred to God Himself. We may add, as further proof, that God proposes Himself to the soul which loves Him, as a reward to be possessed in due time, saying: 'I will be thy reward exceeding great.' Moreover, if the love of concupiscence is joined with the love of benevolence, it directly and of itself tends to God, and not to anything different or distinct from God, primarily, indeed, as being in Himself infinite goodness, but secondarily, as being our good, and the term of His own divine glory in us; because He Who is Himself God helps us to obtain our last end. Therefore, by the love of concupiscence, understood in this sense, we love God in every respect in which He is lovable, and therefore this love is consummate charity of God. Urged by this love, the Apostle, with untiring zeal,

preached the Gospel of Christ, 'that he might be made partaker thereof, and ran in the race that he might receive an incorruptible crown';[1] and St. Augustine advises all those who love God never to cease desiring as their reward Him Who alone is able fully to satisfy all their desires.[2]

From what has been said thus far, we see that we may love God, not only because He is in Himself infinitely worthy of our love, but because He is infinitely good to us, and because He will reward us with everlasting happiness if we keep His Holy Law. Therefore, the virtue of charity, commends itself to us for two reasons—first, because it is excellent in itself; and secondly, because it is necessary for securing the very purpose for which we breathe the breath of life.

As with most other things, so is it with charity also—its excellence may be tested by its effects, for a tree is known by its fruits. The first fruit, then, of charity, is its power to make us just and pleasing to God. No sooner does it enter our hearts, than it straightway burns up and destroys whatever filth of sin there may be in them. It does this so effectually that God, Whose eye can see all things, no matter how cleverly they may be hidden away from view, no longer sees there anything to displease Him. Hence St. Peter says of charity, 'that it covers a multitude of sins,'[3] and when anything is said to be covered in the sight of God, that thing no longer exists. From this we may easily understand why charity is ever spoken of in Holy Writ in the highest strains of eulogy. It is called 'the bond of perfection,' or the link which holds together the sum of all that virtue which lies within the circle of the comprehensive term 'perfection.' It is said to be superior to faith and hope;[4] it is called the greatest and the first commandment;[5] and the beloved Disciple goes so far as to say that God Himself is charity.[6] It not only makes us just but, by that very fact, unites us to God in the closest bonds

[1] Cor. ix. 23.
[2] Analecta Juris. Pontif., *Quietisme*, 1855.
[3] 1 Pet. iv. 8.
[4] 1 Cor. xiii. 13.
[5] St. Matt. xxii. 38.
[6] 1 St. John iv. 16.

of friendship; for Our Lord says: 'He that loveth Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. You are My friends: I will not now call you servants, but I have called you friends.'[5] Moreover, it perfects whatever virtue there may be in us. Hence the urgency of the Apostle, who so earnestly recommends it to the Colossians, that he bids them 'above *all* things have charity.'[6] Now, if they were by these words told to aim, in a most special manner, at the attainment of this virtue, and to strain every nerve to win it, charity must, in the mind of the Apostle, have been considered to be of all other virtues the most necessary.

Therefore, it commends itself to us, not only on account of its excellence, but on account of its necessity, an argument which comes more closely home to us, and therefore has greater weight in urging us to strive to win charity, with all that intensity of purpose whereof our soul is capable. It is so necessary, that without it salvation is impossible, for no one can be saved without the aid of sanctifying grace; and this cannot exist apart from charity, for, St. John says: 'He that loveth not, abideth in death.'[1] The gift of tongues bestowed upon the Apostles and upon many of the primitive Christians, was a great favour of God, and necessary at the time for the propagation of the Gospel; yet if any of those who were so honoured by Him had been without the virtue of charity, they would have been little better than the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal. The gift of prophecy and a clear insight into the mysteries of God, together with a wide range of human science, and a faith strong enough to move mountains, are certainly desirable things, and he who is so fortunate as to possess them is regarded as a man highly favoured by God. Nevertheless, none of these gifts is so necessary for him as charity. If he had them all, and if he had not this, their possession would profit him nothing. Nay, if he were so well disposed towards his fellow-men as to distribute his worldy goods to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked,

[1] St. John xiv. 21; xv. 14. [2] Col. iii. 14. [3] 1 St. John iii. 14.

and if he had not this love of God, without which the Law would be but half fulfilled, it would profit him nothing.

Since charity, then, is so necessary for us, and since God Himself is so worthy of our love, it is our duty, it is our interest, to love Him with all the power of our mind and of our heart. Do what we will, our most strenuous efforts will fall far short of that which they ought to be, because God is so great that He cannot be loved as He ought. We may therefore, very aptly conclude this section with the words of St. Thomas of Villanova: 'Thou hast given me, O Lord, that which ought to attach me to Thee; give me that also, which I ought to give to Thee. For if I am not worthy to love Thee, O my God! Thou art most worthy to be loved by me! I will, therefore, love Thee without measure, for that which Thou hast done for me is without measure. There is no love where love either imposes limits or seeks them; the measure of love is to do everything without measure. Its limit is to have no limit. Spiritual love has no law, no limit, no measure. It is its own measure, its own limit, its own law.'[1]

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## SECTION II.

### LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

WHEN the Pharisee asked Our Lord: 'Which is the *great* commandment of the Law?' he was told that 'It is the love of God above all things.' 'This,' said Jesus, 'is the greatest and the first commandment, and the second is like to this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."'[2] Therefore, after treating of the first part of the precept, let us now turn our attention to the second.

By the word *neighbour* we must understand all those who are capable of supernatural happiness, or who already enjoy it; hence we may see at a glance the wide range of our obligation, and the scope given to us for the exer-

[1] Sermo., De Maria Magdalena. [2] St. Matt. xxii. 36.

cise of our love. It includes not only all the human race, whether Christians or Infidels, whether just or unjust, whether friends or enemies, but also the Angels, the Saints, and the holy souls who, in the penal fires of Purgatory, are cleansing their garments from the spots and stains which they contracted during their mortal life, and which they had not thoroughly purged away before their departure hence. All these must be loved with the love of benevolence, which, as we know, is a love of others for their own sake. Almighty God has imposed upon us a special command to cultivate a love such as this towards our fellowmen: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you.'[1] 'This commandment,' says St. John, 'we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother.'[2] He must love him, not by making an external show of benevolence and affection, which oftentimes hides a heart full of rancour, hatred, and bitterness. His love must be true, real love. 'From a sincere heart,' says St. Peter, 'love one another earnestly.'[3] A love such as this does not live in the heart only. Like good seed, hidden in a rich soil, it breaks forth and manifests itself in a plentiful harvest of kindly deeds. It responds with generosity to the exhortation of St. John, who says: 'Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.'[4] The observance of this precept binds us, just as the precept of loving God binds us. That is to say, that as we are bound to elicit an act of the love of God when we first come to the use of reason, when we are in danger of death, and also frequently during life, so we are bound in the like circumstances to love our neighbour. Again; as we are bound to elicit an act of the love of God when we are in danger of falling into grievous sin, and also when the precept of contrition must be observed—as, for instance, when we are in danger of death, and there is no priest at hand to absolve us—so, also, we are bound to make an act of love or

[1] St. Matt. xxii. and St. John xiii. [2] 1 St. John iv. 21.
[3] 1 St. Pet. i. 22. [4] 1 St. John iii, 18.

our neighbour, when the hatred of him which springs up in our heart cannot be otherwise repressed, and when he stands in need of our assistance for his bodily well-being, or for the health of his soul.

As there is a love of our neighbour which is good, so is there a love of him which is evil and sinful. In order, therefore, that our love of him may be free from all fault, it must possess certain qualities. In the first place, the end which we have in view in our love must be upright, and the motive which urges us to love him must be good. We must love him for God's sake; and we do this when we love him either because he is already our neighbour in God, or in order that he may become so. In the next place our love must be just in its object; that is to say, we must never condescend or yield to our neighbour in anything that is evil, for this would be in reality the greatest act of hatred. Moreover, our love must be just in its principle; that is, we must not love our neighbour for our own advantage. In other words, a man is not to be loved simply because he is kind, or affable to us, or pleasing in his manners, or of kin with us, or because he is guided in his conduct by the same views and tastes that shape our actions. Anyone who loves another for reasons such as these loves him for the good, or the profit, or the pleasure which he himself receives from him, and not for his personal worth, or because he is the child of God and co-heir with himself of an eternal kingdom.

But, you will ask, does God, in His precept of loving all men, include those who are our enemies? We answer: there can be no doubt whatever that such is the mind of God. Among those who must be loved by us He includes those who hate either us, or those belonging to us, and who have injured either us or them, no matter how grievously. In the Gospel He says most emphatically; 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you.'[1] The reason is not difficult to find; for, Christ came to call men unto

[1] St. Matt. v. 44.

higher things, and to show them a yet more perfect way than was that in which those who were under the old Dispensation were expected to walk. Hence, He looks for a higher standard of holiness from us than from those who lived under the law of fear, and therefore, in our love of our fellow-men, we must show a more solid and enduring affection than could be hoped for from those who lived under the Dispensation which He came not to destroy, but to perfect. Hence, we must love not only those who love us, but those who revile, injure, and hate us. If we do not perfect our love to this degree, we are no better than the very heathen, for they too are capable of this. They salute those who salute them; they do good to those who benefit them; they love those who love them: '*Et ethnici hoc faciunt!*'[1] Hence St. Augustine commenting upon these words, says: 'Our Lord in this place does not give us a mere counsel or a piece of salutary advice, but a real precept': and justly so; for are not our enemies still our neighbours, in spite of their enmity? Are they not still capable of eternal happiness? If so, are they not to be loved? Most certainly! Hence, we are never at any time allowed to hate them, but, on the contrary, we are obliged to wish them well, and when they are in necessity, to succour them, as far as we are able. Also, it is our duty on the earliest opportunity to seek to be reconciled to our brother who has in any way by word or by deed, offended us. The obligation of opening negotiations for the purpose of putting matters upon a peaceful footing lies upon him who first gave offence. This he may do either personally or through the intervention of another. If, however, both parties have been equally in the wrong, and if their position in the social scale is almost equal, then both are obliged, when an opportunity presents itself, to begin the reconciliation by mutually saluting each other, or by speaking to each other when they meet in company, or in any other way which they may find most convenient. 'Generally speaking,' says Ferraris, 'when equals are at variance, he

[1] St. Matt. v. 44.

is bound to salute and to speak first who either passes before the other, or comes up to the place in which he happens to be either sitting or standing.'[1]

The signs of affection and of reconciliation usually employed on these occassions are divided by theologians into common and special. Common signs are those that are generally used among civilised or polished men in the daily intercourse of social or of civil life; special signs are given only to those with whom we are connected in a more intimate way. Invitations to dine, or to stay in our house as a guest, would be of this latter kind. The precept of charity obliges us to give the common signs of affection to even our bitterest enemies; for if we were to refuse these signs we should be taking revenge. There are certain cases, however, in which it is lawful to refuse even these common and ordinary signs of affections. Parents, for instance, who have been either grossly injured or insulted by their children, may do so, in order that, by withholding from them even these general signs of love, they may lead the offending parties to see the gravity of their fault. Again; if anyone sees that, by saluting or by speaking to his enemy, the latter will take advantage of his kindness to abuse him still more, he is justified in refusing to take the slightest notice of him, and in withholding from him even those trivial marks of esteem which the commonest politeness would urge him to offer. Also, we may add that those are excused from showing these signs who would be excited to still greater anger and resentment by the sight of the persons who have either grievously insulted or injured them.

With respect to the *special* signs of affection and love, we may say in general that they need not be manifested towards enemies, and there is no obligation to show them; for, the omission of them is not a sign of hatred or of revenge. But if their omission would create scandal, or if the giving of them would lead our enemy to be reconciled to us and to God, and we could without any grievous inconvenience

[1] Bibliotheca, etc.; Virtus, No. 2.

show these signs, then we should be obliged to make use of them towards our enemies; 'for we ought not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil by good.[1] Hence, though there is no strict obligation that we should be the first to salute those who have injured us, and who are our enemies, yet if our not doing so would scandalize others and if we have heretofore been in the habit of saluting these persons, charity exhorts us not to give place to wrath, but to cast out the devil of hatred by the potent charm of brotherly love. Therefore, not only we ought to be ready to do this, but we should be on the alert to make all things smooth, and to pave the way for reconciliation. If our enemy salutes us, we are bound to return his salute. Not to do so would be to give an evident sign that we despise him, and that we are determined to keep up hostilities. This, however, does not hold good in the case of Superiors, who sometimes are obliged not to notice the salutations of delinquents, in order to inspire them with a salutary horror of the offences which necessitate so great coldness and severity on the part of those who should be to them as gentle as a father, and loving as a mother.

In conclusion, we may say that our charity towards our neighbour ought to manifest itself in two ways; first, by wishing him all prosperity, and secondly, by doing what in us lies to make him prosperous. This will make us fulfil the apostolic injunction, 'not to love in word only, but in deed, and in truth.'[2] Hence, our charity will naturally divide itself into two parts; it will care for the needs of our brethren, whether these affect their souls or their bodies. When they are sick, it will prompt us to visit and to encourage them to bear with patience the infirmities sent to them by the hand of God. If they are either hungry or athirst, it will make us give them meat and drink. When they are naked, it will cause us to respect that common humanity which we share with them, and will induce us to cover their nakedness. It will open our hearts to receive them when they are strangers, as if they were Christ Him-

[1] Rom. xii. 21 [2] 1 St. John iii. 18.

self; and when death strikes them down in the battle of life, it will inspire us with the same sentiments of piety that animated Tobias and made him forsake his table to bury the children of his people, and to perform all the last offices for their remains. With respect to their souls, it will give us good counsel, to suggest to them a right course of action when they are in doubt; courage, to correct them when they fail in their duty and fall into sin; light, to teach them in their ignorance; pity, to console them in their afflictions; mercy, to pardon them the offences which they commit against us; patience, to endure wrongs when they inflict them upon us; and that generosity which will make us pour forth our souls in prayer to God for their temporal and for their eternal welfare. Therefore, in the words of St. Chrysostom, we say: 'Your salvation is perfectly secure, if, not content with caring for yourself, you strive to care for your neighbour also, and to be useful to him, thereby endeavouring to lead him by the hand into the way of truth.'[1]

[1] 3 Hom., in Genes.

# CHAPTER IV.

## *PURITY OF HEART.*

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## SECTION I.

### FREEDOM FROM VENIAL SINS.

PURITY of heart, as we have already observed, is only charity looked at from another point of view. Nevertheless, since it may be regarded as one of the constituent parts of that perfection which is the secondary aim of every man's life, it here claims our attentive consideration. As charity causes the soul to say 'God alone,' so purity of heart makes it resolve to give its love to nothing created. Hence we may say that it consists in having in the heart nothing opposed to God, nothing that would hinder the operations of His grace. It will therefore, need but a glance to reveal the magnitude of the task before him who undertakes to rid his heart of all that crowds out God, or that bars the entrance of it against His ministering Angels who come with their hands full of heavenly graces to adorn and to make it a fit habitation for their Lord and Master. Hercules himself had not a greater or a heavier task when he undertook to cleanse of their accumulated filth the stables of Augias. For the heart by which we mean the carnal, sensitive nature of man—is very corrupt, and prone to breed corruption. It seeks instinctively whatever is comfortable in life, whatever will give it pleasure and gratify its hunger. Its affections are disorderly, its ideas are false, its judgments are erroneous. Consequently, it loves what it ought to hate, it esteems what it ought

to despise, and it clings to what it ought to reject with horror. No wonder, therefore, that the grace of God, powerful as it is in itself, is able to produce so little effect upon the heart of man, until that heart is cleansed from these disorderly affections; for grace is either stopped upon the very threshold by mortal sin and by vicious habits, or if it succeeds in gaining an entrance, it finds so many obstacles crowding up the abode which it wishes to adorn for God, that it is unable to effect the transformation which, in more favourable circumstances, it would infallibly bring about. Therefore, the first step, towards perfection must be to cleanse the heart from all that is opposed to God, and from all that would hinder His divine grace from carrying out the work which it is meant to accomplish.

But with what are we to begin this work of purification? Well may we ask the question, for, just as one who wishes to unravel a tangled skein of thread is puzzled as to where he shall begin to undo the knot, so also is he who has just entered upon the task of self-reform perplexed by the very multiplicity of the matters which call for his instant attention. If we were dealing with those who had been leading wicked lives, we should advise them to begin the work of their perfection by the suppression of grievous sin. But, having to treat with those who have already accomplished this most necessary task, by the removal of the most unsightly and cumbersome of the obstacles opposing spiritual advancement, the next step to be taken is to sweep aside that which, after mortal sin, is the most effectual impediment to the operations of divine grace in the soul. This is a deliberate venial sin. A venial sin is 'a slight transgression of the Law of God, which transgression diminishes the fervour of charity, and makes a man deserve some temporal punishment.' Though it is called *venial* and *slight*, yet it is not, for that reason, to be esteemed as a matter *light* in itself, and therefore to be made of no account; for it is an offence against God, and consequently it surpasses every other evil except mortal sin.

Therefore the terms *venial* and *slight* are applied to it to show only that it is more easily pardoned, and that it is of less weight in comparison with grave offences against the Law of God. But in what precisely consists the difference between a mortal and a venial sin, is a point upon which theologians are not by any means agreed. The clearest explanation is, perhaps, that given by Cardinal Gerdil, who says: 'The difference between a mortal and a venial sin consists in this: a mortal sin is against the Law of God and against the *end* of that Law, which end is charity, and therefore it breaks the bond by which a man adheres to God as to his last end; a venial sin, however, although it is against the Law of God, yet it is not opposed to the end of that Law, and it may, therefore, coexist with charity by which we are united to God.' But though venial sin, when compared with mortal sin, may be said to be slight and insignificant, yet it is always an offence against God, and it implies a certain amount of contempt of God. Hence it is most hateful to Him. Of a truth, after mortal sin, it is the only thing that He can be said to hold in utter abomination.

A glance through the pages of Holy Writ will suffice to prove to us that this is really so. For there we shall find that, after mortal sin, there is nothing that He has visited with such heavy penalties as those offences which all commentators admit to have been but venial offences. For some slight wavering of their faith, the two great leaders of the Jewish people were debarred from entering the Land of Promise. For looking irreverently upon the Ark of the Covenant, upwards of 70,000 Bethsamites were slain. An equal number of David's subjects perished by a plague sent by God to punish him for a slight act of vain glory. Lot's wife was changed into a pillar of salt for looking back with curiosity, and perhaps with some little regret, upon the flaming city whence God had ordered her to depart. Shortly after the promulgation of the Law upon Mount Sinai, a man was found gathering upon the

Sabbath day a little wood wherewith to cook his food. Moses consulted the Lord to know in what way he had to be punished; the answer which came from God was: 'Let him be stoned to death.'

These transgressions are no greater than those which we every day commit, and of which we make so little account. We say: 'They are only *venial* sins:' but they must in themselves be exceedingly malicious and utterly abominable, since He Who is infinitely just inflicts upon similar offences punishments so terrible as are those which the Scriptures record for our instruction. We should think of these when we yield to some slight impatience, or detract our neighbour in matters of little moment, or when we are tempted to tell lies of excuse, or are voluntarily distracted at prayer; then we should never encourage ourselves to transgress by that pitiful reason: 'It is only a venial sin.'

Here there presents itself a further consideration which will help us to make more account of venial sins, and will aid us, consequently, to rid ourselves of them. It is this: it may be that what we consider to be venial sins are in reality mortal. For there are many cases in which even an excellent theologian and casuist would be puzzled to solve the grave doubts which arise as to whether, in certain circumstances, acts which men commit, because they esteem them to be trifles, are not in themselves full of deadly malice. Take for example some sins of detraction; or a case in which one man circulates a report, whether true or false, to the prejudice of his neighbour; or gives utterance to unbecoming and equivocal words; or revolves in his mind thoughts which are dangerous; is the matter, in any of these instances, sufficient to constitute a mortal sin? Even admitting in the case of the evil thoughts that it is, there arises a further question: Has he consented to the pleasure which they excite? for there is a pleasure inseparable from certain thoughts, even when they come unbidden into the mind, and when they are held in loathing and abhorrence; and there is also another pleasure

arising from the act of thinking upon such thoughts. The difficulty is to discriminate between these two acts, and to tell us whether the pleasure experienced arose from the first or from the second. Again; was the pleasure felt, deliberately entertained, or only half entertained, or not entertained at all? Some persons will answer glibly enough: 'A man never sins when he acts in good faith.' This is quite true. But in order to be in good faith what amount of diligence must one use to learn one's duty? They will tell you: 'Moral diligence.' But here again we may insist and ask: 'What is moral diligence?' for it is not an easy thing to determine. Besides, a sin in itself venial, is often enough made mortal by its circumstances. It may excite so great scandal as to be a grievous sin; or cause so great pain to others as to inflict a mortal wound upon charity; or it may be producive of results which manifest themselves only years after the act.[1] Therefore, let those who make small account of venial sin bear these things in mind, and they will deter them from saying 'it is only a venial sin,' and from so easily and so deliberately committing it.

Even if the sins of which they are guilty are nothing more than venial faults, nevertheless they are to be feared, because they dispose the soul to fall into deadly sins. This is one reason the more for being careful on the score of these faults, and for making efforts to acquire purity of heart, by ridding the soul of all affection to them. Venial sin, then, predisposes the soul to fall into grievous sin. For, as St. Thomas teaches, it is to the soul what slight illnesses are to the body. These do not destroy life. Oftentimes they do not cause much inconvenience; but the danger of them consists in the fact that they break down the general health of the system, and deprive it of that power of resistance which we call *stamina*. Not having this, we are liable to catch any grave disease to which we may be exposed, and having once contracted it, and being without the strength requisite to cast it off, we succumb to it and

[1] Œuvres Spirit: du R. P. Judde, S.J., Tom. I.

die. In the same way venial sin, oftentimes repeated, drains the vital power of the soul. This as we all know, consists in the clearness of the divine light, which makes us estimate all things at their true value; in that lively faith which penetrates the darkness in which God shrouds Himself, and makes us see Him in all the circumstances of life. It is manifested, also, in the vivid apprehension which it generates of the eternal truths; and in that strength of will which holds captive the roving imagination and all the senses of the body. But when we grow careless about venial sin, and contract the habit of deliberately committing it, the brilliancy of the divine light in our soul very speedily grows dim; the keenness of our faith is blunted, and the awe-inspiring truths of death, and judgment, and hell, are shorn of half their terrors. The heart loses its spirit of recollection and of vigilance; its sensitiveness to the sting of remorse is deadened; it grows presumptuous; it becomes careless of danger, and consequently falls an easy prey to the devil, who plunges it into the mire of mortal sin.

What other fate can we expect, if we are so disposed towards God as to say: 'This is displeasing to Him, but it matters not; it is *only* a venial sin!' Or again: 'This may be displeasing to Him, or it may not; but I will not trouble myself to find out the truth.' This is to treat God with indifference; and He, like a friend received with coldness, and made of little account, withdraws from us and leaves us without that special protection which He lavishes upon His docile and obedient children. Then we fall little by little. Imperceptibly to ourselves, imperceptibly oftentimes even to others, we draw nearer and nearer to the abyss, till at last we fall over its brink, and we are, perhaps, doomed never to rise again.

Therefore, because these slight sins and faults are so hateful to God, and because they may so easily be grave, while we deem them of little moment, and also because they prepare the soul to consent to deadly sin, it is imperatively necessary for everyone, and especially for all who

aspire to perfection, with all possible care to avoid them, and thus to tend to the acquisition of that purity of heart without which perfection is absolutely impossible.

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## SECTION II.

### FREEDOM FROM EVIL HABITS.

AFTER cleansing the soul from venial faults as well as from grievous sins, the next step to be taken is to rid ourselves of evil habits. A habit is a facility in the performance of any act, acquired by the frequent repetition of that act. This repetition makes so deep an impression upon our mental faculties and upon our physical organism, that we are able to do without difficulty, and, as it were, mechanically, that which at first required close attention and strenuous effort. Now, a habit of good or of evil, soon becomes a second nature; for man is a creature of habit; and hence the necessity for rooting out bad habits, and for planting good ones. The Religious, therefore, should look upon himself as set over his soul, to do a work with respect to it similar to that which was given to Jeremias to do with respect to Jerusalem; and to him may be applied the words which God addressed to the Prophet: 'Lo, I have set thee this day to root up, and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant.'[1] He has to uproot, to waste, and to destroy his vicious habits, because these are the outcome of that indulgence which he has, perhaps, given to his passions. It will be necessary, therefore, first of all, to rectify what is amiss in these sources of evil, before any evil habits can be uprooted, or any good habits planted in their stead. Consequently, a few words will be necessary on the passions themselves, in order that we may know how to turn them into so many well-springs of good, instead of suffering them to be so many sources of evil.

[1] Jerem. i. 10.

It will need but very little self-examination and reflection to convince us that, when any good or any evil thing is put before us, no matter whether that good or that evil is real or only apparent, we immediately desire to possess and to enjoy the good, and to turn away from and detest the evil. This desire, or this aversion, is called *appetite*. It is of two kinds—the one *sensitive*, if it springs from a confused representation of the good or of the evil; the other *rational*, if it proceeds from a representation that is clear and distinct. The more of good the sensitive appetite perceives in any object, the more intense is its desire to possess it; and when this intensity of desire is accompanied by an extraordinary or violent corporal sensation, it takes the name *passion*. A passion, therefore, is defined to be 'a movement of the sensitive appetite called into play by the representation made to it of good or of evil, which movement is accompanied by some alteration in the body.' It is called a *passion* (that is to say, something suffered), because, from the simple apprehension of an object either pleasing or displeasing, either present or absent, there is produced in the sensitive appetite something indeliberate and purely passive—that is to say, *suffered* and not *done*—without any active concurrence or any consent of the will. In this sensitive appetite there are two parts—the one the *concupiscible* or that which desires; the other the *irascible* or that which contends against whatever would debar the appetite from obtaining that which it wishes.

From the concupiscible part of the sensitive appetite there spring six passions, the nature of which will be brought out clearly before our eyes by an attentive perusal of the history of Achab's contest with Naboth for the purpose of acquiring possession of the latter's vineyard.[1] The wicked king, seeing that the pleasant vineyard of the Jezrahelite was nigh unto his palace walls, and that it would serve admirably as a garden of delights for himself, in which he might plant fruits and herbs, wherewith to grace his table and to delight his palate, was filled with a

[1] 3 Kings xxi.

sudden movement of complacency at the contemplation of its beauty and of its utility. This movement was the passion of *love*. Very soon this stirred up within him another passion, which made his whole heart go out to the object which had pleased him. He coveted to possess as his own what his love had fastened upon; hence there was roused up into full life and activity the passion of *avarice*. Had Naboth closed at once with his offer to purchase, he would have clutched eagerly at the prize; and then another passion of his heart would have been gratified by its possession. He would have *joyed* in the object of his covetousness. But the Jezrahelite did not wish to part with what was dear to him as being a portion of his paternal inheritance. He met the offer of exchange and of purchase with the fervent exclamation: 'The Lord be merciful to me, and not let me give thee the inheritance of my fathers.' At once three devouring and unruly passions were let loose within the bosom of Achab, to rend him with their merciless fangs. He *hated* Naboth because his refusal to give him what he coveted was an evil unto him, and it contradicted his heart's fondest desire; he held him in *abomination*, as being the cause of an evil from which he wished to shield himself; and his heart was filled with mortal *sadness*, because the evil which he dreaded had come upon him: 'And Achab', says the Sacred Text, 'came into his house angry and fretting, because of the word that Naboth the Jezrahelite had spoken to him, saying, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And casting himself upon his bed, he turned away his face to the wall and would eat no bread.'

Such are the passions of the concupiscible part of the sensitive appetite. Under the irascible part, or that which rises up to break through all the obstacles which hedge round what is good and pleasing to the sensitive appetite, there are five other passions, three of which we find in Achab, when his proposals were rejected by Naboth, and the remaining two in his unscrupulous wife Jezabel, whose name has become a synonym for all that is wicked in

woman. On hearing Naboth's flat refusal, at any price or upon any terms, to part with the much-coveted vineyard, his heart was filled with the passion of *fear*, lest the threatened evil of non-possession should never be removed. Then it was inflamed with *anger*, because evil had actually fallen upon him, and the instinct of revenge stirred fiercely within him. Finally, thinking that there was no hope, he petulantly flung himself down upon his bed, and began to *despair* of ever satisfying the greed which was devouring him and robbing him of his peace.

His wicked wife, perceiving his dejection and grief, went unto him and said: 'What is the matter, that thy soul is so grieved, and why eatest thou no bread.' Then he told her of his interview with Naboth, and that Naboth had refused to accede to his wishes. At once the passions of this daring woman were roused into action by the desirability of winning that which her husband coveted. In other words, the *hope* of gaining it, and the *daring* to try to gain it, were stirred up within her, and she answered scornfully, and with all the biting sarcasm which a women knows so well both how and when to employ: 'Thou art of great authority, indeed, and governest well the kingdom of Israel. Arise! and eat bread, and be of good cheer. *I* will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezrahelite.' So insignificant did the difficulties appear, that she already saw the much-coveted vineyard in her husband's possession; and the prospect of compassing the end which she had in view filled her with the pleasure of *hope*, and the *audacity* to risk very much rather than be frustrated in her designs. Naboth must be got rid of, since he would not yield up his vineyard to the king. Accordingly, she devised the plot which was to ensnare and ruin him. Her willing tools first suborned false witnesses to convict him of treason and blasphemy, and then pronounced sentence of death upon him, which the people immediately carried into effect. Then she swept proudly into the chamber in which the disconsolate Achab lay fretting upon his bed, and with an air of triumph exclaimed: 'Arise, and take possession of

the vineyard of Naboth the Jezrahelite, who would not agree with thee and give it thee for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.'

These, then, are the passions which spring up in the heart of man. From the concupiscible part of his sensitive appetite proceed love, desire, joy, hatred, abomination, and sadness; from the irascible part, hope, audacity, despair, fear, and anger. In themselves, these passions are not evil; they are good, for they serve to carry the soul onwards to its true end, which is the possession of God. Nevertheless, because the objects towards which they tend are external, sensible goods, the passions are liable, unless kept under strict control, to rush upon these goods with an avidity so gluttonous, as gravely to imperil our eternal well-being. We may liken them to eleven fiery coursers yoked to the chariot of the soul. If right reason sits behind them, and firmly grasping the reins, applies, when necessary, the stinging lash, they bear the soul surely and swiftly onwards to its true home. But if reason, casting out of its hands the lash of mortification, flings down the reins, they at once break loose from control, and rushing wildly forwards hurry the unhappy soul into the yawning abyss of bottomless perdition. Hence the necessity for keeping them well in hand, and for holding a tight grip of the reins. To indulge them in all that they seek and desire is but to render them unmanageable. They are kept within due bounds only by continually thwarting them in those things for which they clamour with so insatiable a greed.

To do this is the only wise course of action. It is conformable to the teaching of the Sacred Scripture, to the prescriptions of the Fathers, and to the dictates of sound reason. 'Go not after thy lusts,' says the Wise Man;[1] and the Apostle adds: 'You shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.'[2] Almighty God, seeing the displeasure of Cain at the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, and at the rejection of his own, told him plainly that it was because he had not

[1] Ecclus. xviii. 30. [2] Gal. v. 16.

curbed and brought into subjection the passions of his soul, and added: 'The lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it.'[1] St. Augustine tells us how this subjugation of our fallen nature must be accomplished: 'Your concupiscence wishes you to follow its dictates. Do nothing of the kind! It rises up in rebellion against you; do you take up arms against it. It fights against you; do you fight against it. It attacks you; do you attack it, and let your chief care be not to suffer yourself to be conquered by it.'[2]

A wiser counsel, or one more in accordance with sound reason, could not possibly be given; for every species of vice and of sin springs from the passions. Like so many bonds, they hamper the free action of the limbs, and drag us to the various evils which they serve. They are the flaming brands which set our hearts on fire; the goads which pierce and torment us; the thongs which at times are either tightened or relaxed. They are the impetuous winds which beat down upon the vessel of the soul, and toss it about in a perpetual tempest; they are the nails which tightly fasten the heart down to earthly things; they are the dense clouds which obscure the intelligence and the reason.[3] Therefore, it is imperatively necessary that each should set to work with all the earnestness of his soul to curb and to mortify these passions, which otherwise will infallibly bring about his eternal damnation.

But how is this to be done? Let us earnestly endeavour to learn, in order that by making use of the method prescribed we may acquire that purity of heart at which we are aiming.

The best means for securing this is to propose to the passions the most excellent goods that they are capable of desiring. Then from what is perishable and transitory, to raise them to that good which is eternal, even unto God Himself. He is the Supreme Good wherewith they can satiate the craving that is never appeased by the transitory

[1] Gen. iv. 7. [2] Serm. xlviii., De Temp., c. 8.
[3] Gerson, De Passion, Consid. viii.

goods of this world. Hence, anyone may see that Almighty God never intended us to deprive our passions of their legitimate food, but only of that which excites their hunger without appeasing it. His will is that the superior, the nobler part of man, should teach the senses, the appetite, and even the flesh itself, to thirst after Him only, and as far as feeble nature will permit, to elevate themselves to Him. Hence, it is necessary so to regulate the love of our hearts, that they will never fasten their affections upon the things which here below flatter the senses, but upon virtue and upon God. Concupiscence or desire must not be suffered to go out to the goods of soul or of body, except in so far as these goods are useful and helpful unto eternal salvation. The joy of the heart must be so regulated that it will be glad only in God, in His infinite perfections and in whatever may advance the well-being of our neighbour. Hatred must be directed against nothing but sin and whatever may lead to sin. Aversion, or the passion of abomination, must be employed only to turn us away with disgust and horror from sin and from the occasions of it; from bad company, from evil or from dangerous conversations. Sorrow must be used only to lament over our sins and the sins by which others offend Our good God. Hope must be turned, not to the fleeting good things of this world, but to those eternal joys which await us in the world to come. Audacity or daring must be so regulated that, while filling us with courage to undertake arduous things and to encounter difficulties for God's sake, it will prevent us from trusting too much to our own strength and too little to the omnipotence of God. Despair must be met, checked, and overcome, so that the soul may never abandon the hope of obtaining divine grace, eternal salvation and the means by which these inestimable goods may be secured. Fear of such things as hurt the body must never be suffered to spring up in our hearts, or to become a hindrance to us in the performance of our duty to God and to our fellow-men; but only the fear of those things that hurt the soul and

imperil its eternal well-being. Anger must be so evenly balanced, that it will never go beyond just limits, in its desire of redress, or in its infliction of punishment.

If the passions be thus carefully held in check by the superior or rational part of the soul, they will be purged—as far as it is possible to purge them in this world—of all those imperfections that prevent the soul from being clean and pleasing in God's sight, and thus another step will have been made in the acquisition of purity of heart and of a closer union with God.

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## SECTION III.

### REGULATION OF THE THOUGHTS.[1]

THE thoughts which throng into the mind are another source of the impurity which stains and disfigures the soul. Therefore, whoever is striving to attain to perfection must be solicitous about his thoughts, as our holy Father advises; for, not every thought is holy, nor are the impulses springing from it good. In fact, we may liken the mind of man to one of those water mills, which in this our day are becoming so scarce as to be objects of curiosity. The stream of water falling upon the huge wheel, causes it to revolve and to keep the mill-stones whirling. But it depends upon the miller to determine what kind of grain the mill shall grind—whether it shall be corn or barley, whether it shall be oats or rye. So is it also with our mind. Its activity ever keeps it on the move, and objects of all kinds are brought under its notice and subjected to its consideration. As they present themselves at the door, they have to stand before the will-faculty, which, as supreme master of the mind, can either accept or reject them according as it shall seem good to it. If they are admitted, they are straightway subjected to the operation of the intelligence and of the reason, and by them are

[1] Cassian, Collation, I., Cap. 18.

wrought into wholesome food for the sustenance of the soul, or into a deadly poison for its destruction. Hence the will must be trained to make a judicious selection, and to admit only such matter for thought as will conduce to preserve the health and to augment the strength of our spiritual nature.

In order to make this judicious selection, it will be necessary to know the sources whence spring the thoughts which come into our minds. As the mind is spiritual and rational, it may receive impressions from beings which are like itself, rational and spiritual. Therefore, the sources, whence our thoughts arise may be reduced to three: God, the devil, and ourselves. Our thoughts come from God, when He deigns to visit us by the light of the Holy Spirit, and inspires us with those that make us aim at greater perfection, fill us with sorrow for our sins, and urge us to enter upon a higher and better way of life. It was from God that came the thought which inspired Assuerus with the idea of having read to him the annals in which was recorded the good service done by Mardochai the Jew. The king, having heard it, asked what reward he had received; and being told that none had yet been given, ordered that he should be raised to the highest rank, and that the edict recently framed for the destruction of the Jews should be recalled.[1] David clearly shows us his belief that God sends good thoughts into the mind, for, he says, in one of the Psalms: 'I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me.'[2] The fact that God does speak to us is put beyond doubt by the express words of Our Lord, when He says: 'If any one love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him.'[3] On another occasion, speaking to His Apostles, He says: 'It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.'[4] Hence, all thoughts that move us to do what is undoubtedly good, may be set down as coming from God; for, only

[1] Esther vi. [2] Ps. lxxxiv. 9. [3] St. John xiv. 23.
[4] St. Matt. x. 20.

pure and wholesome water can come from a good spring, and good fruit from a good tree; for grapes are not gathered from thorns, nor are figs from thistles.

On the other hand, we may attribute to the devil all thoughts that aim at withdrawing the soul from its allegiance to God, by luring it on to sinful pleasures, or by representing to it evil under the guise of good. It was from the devil that the thought of betraying Our Lord came into the mind of Judas: 'When supper was done,' says the Evangelist, 'the devil put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him.'[1] In the twenty-seventh verse of the same chapter, it is recorded that when the traitor had swallowed the morsel of bread which Our Lord presented to him as a sign by which the beloved disciple might know who he was that should betray the Lord, 'the devil entered into him after the morsel.' St. Peter, when sternly rebuking Ananias for his falsehood, said: 'Why hath Satan tempted thy heart that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost?[2] In the book of Ecclesiastes we find the same truth expressed thus: 'If the spirit of Him that hath power ascend upon thee, leave not thy place;'[3] and in the third book of Kings this evil Spirit, addressing God, says of the impious King Achab: 'I will go forth and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.'[4]

Finally, our thoughts proceed from ourselves when they are the result of our remembrance of what we have done, or of what we have understood. The royal Psalmist spoke of the thoughts which had proceeded from his own heart when he said: 'I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years. And I meditated in the night with my own heart; and I was exercised.'[5] In another place he thus speaks of these same thoughts: 'The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vain.'

Having learnt the sources whence our thoughts proceed, our next duty is to keep a careful watch over our mind, and

[1] St. John xiii. 2. [2] Acts v. 3. [3] Eccles. x. 4.
[4] Cap. xxii. 22. [5] Ps. lxxvi. 6; and xciii. 2.

as soon as any present themselves to our intelligence, to submit them to a searching examination, in order to discover their origin and their author; and, having found out this, to treat them according to their deserts. We must act towards them as bankers act with the notes and the coin which are presented in their offices. A note is not accepted simply because it has the appearance of being good; nor is a coin received because it has the glitter of gold, and bears the sign and the superscription of the Sovereign. They know full well that some notes are forged and that many a glittering coin is naught but some base metal washed with gold. What, then, do they do? They hold the note up to the light to discover whether it is the true paper issued from the Bank; and they sound the coin to see whether it gives forth the ring of precious metal. This is precisely how we ought to act with the thoughts which present themselves at the treasury of our mind, desiring to be accepted there as genuine notes and true coin. As soon as they offer themselves we must examine them to see whether they bear the sign and the superscription of the Holy Spirit. But this will not be enough, because a false coin is often as perfect to all appearance as a true one. Therefore, we must sound them to discover whether they give forth the ring of the precious metals; that is to say, we must see whether the thoughts which have every appearance of being good and of coming from God, are not in reality full of the base alloy of earthly, selfish, and even sinful motives. If we discover that they are base, or that they are mixed with too much alloy, or that they are not quite up to the weight necessary to give them currency in the kingdom of God, we must act as the prudent money-changers of the world do: we must reject the base, and purge the good from their alloy, and fill up what is wanting in those that are below the recognised weight. Then they may with safety and profit be taken into the treasury of our hearts, and with them, we shall be able to purchase from the mercy of God our everlasting mansion in his heavenly kingdom.

As we have said before it depends upon ourselves what shall be the nature of the thoughts which we admit into our minds. Some persons try to excuse themselves by saying that the mind is so weak and unstable, that it is impossible to keep out the multitude of vain, unprofitable, and sinful thoughts and ideas which force their way into it, and thence find an entrance to the heart, captivating and enslaving it in the service of the passions. Their reasoning is almost as absurd as would be that of any one who should maintain that it is impossible for a man to swim, because his body being heavier than water, must of necessity sink in it. We know that such an assertion is false, because we ourselves are, perhaps, able to swim, and because we have seen others do so. So, also, every good Religious knows both that it is possible to feed the mind with nothing but good thoughts, and that there are thousands and millions who actually suffer it to feed upon no other food. That feebleness, that instability, that giddiness of mind about which worldlings and sinners speak, and upon which they lay the blame of all the evil that crowds into the soul, cannot be attributed to the nature of the soul itself, or to God Who created it; for, the Wise Man says: 'God made man right; it is he himself that entangleth himself in a multitude of questions'[1]—that is to say, in vain and unprofitable thoughts. The quality of these thoughts depends upon man himself.

If care and prudence do not ensure success in this respect, then the fault must not be laid upon our nature, but upon our negligence. The Psalmist seems to be persuading us of this when he says: 'Blessed is the man whose help is from the Lord: 'in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps.'[2] From this it is evident that we are able to make steps in our hearts, that is to say, to introduce thoughts by which, as by so many steps, we may mount unto God. If man were unable to do this, the reproach of Our Lord to the Pharisees would not have been just: 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?'[1] Vain, also, would

[1] Eccles. vii. 30. [2] Ps. lxxxiii. 6. [3] St. Matt. ix. 4.

have been the exhortation of Isaias to the people of Judah and of Jerusalem: 'Take away the evil of your devices (that is, of your thoughts) from my eyes;'[1] and equally unprofitable the pathetic appeal of Jeremias to the same sinful city: 'How long shall hurtful thoughts abide in thee?'[2] Moreover, God would not threaten to examine in the day of judgment our thoughts as well as our works, unless it were in our power to choose the good and to reject the bad: 'I know their works and their thoughts: I come that I may gather them together with all nations and tongues: and they shall come and shall see my glory.'[3] Also, St. Paul teaches that on the day upon which God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel, their consciences will bear witness against them, and their thoughts will either accuse or defend them.'[4]

Therefore, the Christian and the Religious are able, by the aid of God's grace, first of all to discover from what source their thoughts arise, and then to admit into their hearts good, and to reject evil. A little watchfulness and prayer will soon render them so quick-sighted in this respect, and will invest them with so great authority and power, that, like the Centurion, they will be able to say 'to one, Go, and he will go; and to another, Come, and he will come; and to their servant, Do this, and he will do it.'[5] Whenever any evil, or vain, or unprofitable thoughts present themselves at the door of their intelligence, and knock for admission, they will be able to say: 'Go!' and these will flee away; or if they persist, and knock, and clamour for admittance, they will be able to keep the door fast closed, and, like the armed man spoken of in the Gospel, all their possessions will be in peace. Such thoughts, like vicious dogs fast chained to the wall, cannot harm them. They may bark, but they cannot bite. To good thoughts they will say: 'Come,' and, obedient to their call, they will present themselves and they will be admitted into their hearts, to help them to keep out their

[1] Isaias i. 16. [2] Jer. iv. 14. [3] Isaias lxvi. 18.
[4] Rom. ii. 15. [5] St. Matt. viii. 9.

enemies and to fight the battles of the Lord. To their servant, the flesh, they will say: 'Do this; and he will do it.' He will be continent and chaste. He will obey them, and faithfully serve them. Thus, by watching over their thoughts, they will purify and cleanse those thoughts from everything that might sully the purity of their hearts, and prevent them from acquiring that perfection with which God wishes their souls to be graced, as with a diadem of glory. Therefore, in order to meet and to beat off the swarms of evil and unprofitable thoughts that rise up and endeavour to effect an entrance into the sanctuary of their hearts, let them arm themselves with the spiritual panoply with which the Apostle desires all to be covered who wish to cope with the principalities and the powers, with the spirits of wickedness in high places. Let their loins be girt with truth, their hearts protected with the breastplate of justice, and their feet shod with preparation of the Gospel of peace. Let them have the shield of faith to ward off the fiery darts of the most wicked one; the helmet of salvation upon their heads; and firmly grasped in their strong right hand, the keen sword of the Spirit, for, within the sweep of that trenchant blade, the boldest spirit of hell will not dare to stand.[1]

[1] Ephes. vi. 13.

Attention to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit is the fourth means of acquiring purity of heart; but, as we shall have to treat of this among the instruments of perfection, nothing further need here be said about it.

# CHAPTER V.

## *HUMILITY.*

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### SECTION I.

#### ITS NATURE.

HUMILITY enters so largely into the idea of perfection, that some writers consider it to be perfection itself. Without going so far as this, we may safely say that, if it is not perfection, it is at least so essential a part of it, that the notion of perfection would be inadequate if it were left out, for, it is to perfection what a foundation is to a building, and what leaven is to the mass of dough into which it is inserted for the purpose of penetrating into and of permeating the entire mass, so that it may be made into good wholesome bread. As we have already, in a preceding chapter,[1] said that it is one of the constituent parts of perfection, though perfection, in reality, is not at all made up of parts, but is essentially one act, whether we consider it to be a habit or a state—it will be necessary here to treat more at large of humility, in order the better to understand its nature, its obligations, and the motives which should urge us to cultivate it with the greatest care and assiduity.

Humility, then, is defined to be 'a virtue by which we put a curb upon the mind, and prevent it from tending immoderately to lofty things above itself.'[2] It is a virtue; for, when Our Lord was speaking to the multitudes, He

[1] Chapter i, p. 10. [2] St. Thomas, II., i., q. 161.

bade them learn it of Him as being a something specially characteristic of Himself: 'Learn of Me, to be humble of heart.'

The Angelic Doctor gives an admirable reason why it is a virtue. 'Any good thing,' he says, 'that is difficult to obtain, is no sooner presented to the appetite, than it attracts the appetite, and makes it go out to it; and at the same time that the appetite feels drawn to desire the good, it finds therein, also something which repels it; and this is the difficulty of obtaining possession of what it sees to be good. The good itself excites the motion of hope, the difficulty that of despair. Now, a moral virtue which moderates and checks, has to do with those movements of the appetite which come by way of impulse. In the case of those movements that withdraw and repel, the moral virtue must strengthen and push forwards. Hence, a twofold virtue is necessary with respect to all good that is difficult of attainment: the one tempers and checks the mind from tending immoderately to what is above it, and this pertains to *humility;* the other fortifies the mind against despair, and impels it, in accordance with the dictates of right reason, to the prosecution of great things, and this is the virtue of magnanimity. Thus it is evident that humility is a virtue.'

At first sight it seems as if humility had to do with the intellectual powers of the soul, but this is not so. It deals chiefly with the appetitive powers. It is their guide and ruler. This will be manifest to us if, with St. Agustine,[1] we consider what a truly humble man is. He is one who *chooses* to be an abject in the house of God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners. But *choice* belongs to the appetite, and therefore humility has to do with the appetitive rather than with the intellectual powers. For, if we attentively consider the matter, we shall see that the proper office of humility is to repress one's self, from tending to what is above one's self. For this purpose, however, it is necessary that we should know precisely

[1] De Pœnit.

what that thing is, for the attainment of which our powers are inadequate. Hence, the knowledge of our own defects pertains to humility, and this knowledge is the rule that must direct our appetite. But humility essentially consists in the appetite itself; and therefore it is rightly said to be the director and moderator of the appetite's movements, rather than of those which spring from the intellectual part of our being.

From the important part which this excellent virtue plays in all phases of the spiritual life, it is justly held in the highest esteem by those who aspire to perfection. The most eulogistic encomiums are passed upon it, and men are sometimes led to speak inexactly of it, and to say that it is the most excellent of the virtues. This is incorrect, for if it were, the Apostle would be wrong in so earnestly exhorting the Colossians to prefer charity or the love of God, to all other virtues: 'Above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection.'[1] Therefore, humility does not hold the highest rank among the virtues. What place, then, does it hold? Let us examine the matter a little, and endeavour to see.

There can be no doubt that the excellence of any virtue may be rightly estimated by its aptitude for uniting the soul with God. But the theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, have for their direct object or end God Himself, and therefore they are deservedly put in the first rank, charity holding the highest place, for the Apostle says: 'Now there remain faith, hope and charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity.'[2]

In the next place, we may discover the worth and the dignity of any virtue, by observing in what way it serves the rational faculties of the soul, and assists them in so arranging means, as most easily and securely to obtain the end. The ordering, this arrangement, is essentially confined to the reason itself, but it is shared, in a certain way, by the appetite which is guided and directed by the reason. Hence, as it is the virtue of justice, and especially

[1] Coloss. iii. 14. [2] Corinth. xiii. 13.

of legal justice, that most materially assists the reason to adapt and arrange the multifarious means at hand for the attainment of our last end, the next rank in worth and dignity, after the great theological virtues, charity, faith, and hope, is assigned to it.

Now, what virtue is it which inclines and disposes man to subject himself in all things to the order of right reason, and to obey its dictates? It is the virtue of humility. Therefore, after theological and intellectual virtues, after the virtue of justice, and especially of legal justice which gives the most substantial aid to reason, in rightly adapting means to the end to be gained, comes the great, the important virtue of humility, which, with these exceptions is the most excellent of virtues.

As in other virtues there are various degrees or steps which lead up to the perfection of them, so, also, in the virtue of humility, spiritual writers are wont to assign a certain number of grades, by which they teach that its perfection may be reached. But while all are unanimous about the existence of these grades, not all are by any means unanimous about their number. Some say that there are few grades, others that there are many. St. Thomas,[1] however declares that our holy Father St. Benedict has rightly assigned twelve degrees to the virtue of humility and for this reason; Humility, as we have already seen has to deal chiefly and specially with the appetite, inasmuch as it puts a bridle upon it, reins in its impulses, and prevents them from inordinately tending to great things which are beyond the soul's deserts. But that which regulates the degree of repression necessary for keeping the soul's longings within due bounds is self-knowledge, by which we are hindered from thinking more highly of ourselves than we deserve; and the principle or source, whence this right estimation of self, and the humility consequent upon it, take their rise, is the lowly reverence which we have for God. Admitting, then, that these sentiments have taken possession of the heart, that it reveres God, has a right

[1] St. Thomas, II., ii. q. 161 et q. 162, 4.

view of its own worth, and therefore represses the impulse of the soul towards what is not due unto it, there will be certain *external signs*, which will manifest the existence of humility in the soul, by *words*, by *deeds*, and by *gestures*. Hence the Wise Man says: 'A man is known by his look, and a wise man, when thou meetest him, is know by his countenance.'[1]

Therefore St. Benedict,[2] when treating of humility, makes the *first* degree of that virtue consist in something belonging to its very root, and that is the *fear* of God: 'The first degree of humility is that a man always have the fear of God before his eyes, and that he should not be forgetful of himself.' In the next place he puts something which pertains to the *appetite*, in order that a man may not tend inordinately to his own excellence.

The prevention of this tendency is effected in three ways.

First by not following self-will: 'The second degree of humility is, if any one, not wedded to his own will, seeks not to satisfy his desires, but carries out that saying of Our Lord: "I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me."'[3]

Secondly, by having the will in accordance with the will of the Superior: 'The third degree of humility is that a man submit himself, for the love of God, with all obedience, to his Superior, imitating thereby Our Lord, of Whom the Apostle saith: "He was made obedient, even unto death."'[4]

Thirdly, by not shrinking from this submission, on account of the hard and bitter things which may happen to him: 'The fourth degree of humility is that if in obedience things that are hard, contrary, and injurious be done to him, he embrace them with a quiet conscience, and in suffering them neither grow weary, nor give over, since the Scripture saith: "He only that persevereth to the end shall be saved."'[5]

Also, St. Benedict puts among the degrees of humility

[1] Ecclus. xix. 26. [2] Regula. Cap. vii. [3] St. John vi. 38.
[4] Phillip. ii. 8. [5] St. Matt. xxiv. 13.

certain opinions which a man has of himself as soon as he knows his own defects. These opinions manifest themselves in three ways.

First, by recognising and openly confessing these defects: 'The fifth degree of humility is to manifest to the Abbot, by humble confession, all the evil thoughts of one's heart, and the secret faults which one has committed. The Scripture exhorteth us thereunto, saying: "Reveal thy way to the Lord and hope in Him." '[1]

Secondly, by considering one's self unfit for great or important offices, in consequence of the recognition of these defects: 'The sixth degree of humility is if a monk is content with all that is meanest and poorest, and in everything enjoined him, thinks himself an evil and worthless servant, saying with the Prophet: I have been brought to nothing, and I knew it not. "I have become as a beast before Thee, and I am always with Thee." '[2]

Thirdly, by preferring others to one's self: 'The seventh degree of humility is that a monk not only pronounce with his tongue, but also in his very heart believe himself to be the most abject, and inferior to all others, and humbling himself to say with the Prophet, "I am a worm and no man, the repoach of men and the outcast of the people." '[3]

Moreover, our holy Father, among the degrees of humility, puts certain things by which this virtue externally manifests itself.

It does this first by *deeds* when it causes us in the performance of them not to depart from the common way: 'The eighth degree of humility is that a monk do nothing but what the common rule of the monastery, or the example of his Seniors, teacheth and exhorteth him to do.'

Secondly, by words, by not anticipating the *time* of speaking: 'The ninth degree of humility is for a monk to refrain his tongue from much speaking, and to be silent till a question be asked him, remembering the saying of the Scriptures: "In many words thou shalt not avoid sin,"[4] and "a talkative man shall not be directed upon the earth."[5]

[1] Ps. xxxvi. 5. [2] Ps. lxxii. 23. [3] Ps. xxi. 7.
[4] Prov. x. 19. [5] Ps. cxxxix. 12.

Also, by not exceeding in the *measure* or in *the way* of speaking: 'The eleventh degree of humility is that when a monk speaketh, he do so gently and without laughter; humbly, with gravity, with few words, and discreetly, and that he be not clamorous in his voice, for it is written: "A wise man is known by the fewness of his words." '[1]

Finally, he introduces two other degrees, which consist in external signs and gestures. The first of these is to repress all haughtiness, and especially that of the eyes: "The twelfth degree of humility is that a monk not only have humility in his heart, but also in his exterior show it to all that behold him; so that if he is at work, or is in the oratory, the garden, the field, or on the way; if he is sitting, or walking, or standing, let him always, with head bent down, and eyes fixed upon the earth, think himself guilty for his sins, and about to be presented before the dreadful judgment of God, ever saying to himself, with the Publican in the Gospel: "Lord, I, a sinner, am not worthy to lift up mine eyes to heaven."[2] Again; with the Prophet: "I am bowed down and humbled on every side." '[3] The second is to check all signs of unseemly joy: 'The tenth degree of humility is not to be easily moved, and prompt to laugh, for it is written: "The fool exalteth his voice in laughter." '[4]

By mounting these twelve steps or degrees, the highest point of humility is at last attained, and he who is so happy as to reach it will then straightway, as our holy Father observes, arrive at perfection: 'When the monk has ascended all these degrees of humility, he will presently come to that love of God which is perfect, and which casteth out fear; to that love whereby everything which in the beginning he observed through fear, he will now begin to do by custom, without any labour, and, as it were, naturally; not now through fear of hell, but for the love of Christ, out of a good custom, and a delight in virtue.'[5]

[1] Eccles. x. [2] St. Luke xviii. 13. [3] Ps. cxviii. 107.
[4] Ecclus. xxi. 23. [5] Reg. St. Bened., Cap. 7.

## SECTION II.

### ITS OBLIGATIONS.

FROM what has been said thus far, we may see that the office of humility is one of repression; it keeps self in the background, and prefers others to self. Now, many persons imagine that this repressive power of humility must be exercised with the utmost rigour, and, therefore, that the truly humble man must consider himself to be of all others the worst and most criminal. This, however, is not required. In order, therefore, to understand how far we are obliged to go in the matter of humiliation, it will be necessary to state clearly what the virtue of humility requires us to do in this respect. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, seems to counsel them to put themselves under the feet of all others: for he says: 'Let each esteem others better than himself.'[1] But what is really the mind of the Apostle? It is this: understanding perfectly well that no one is without defect of some kind, he bids them subject themselves to others on that account. Nevertheless, he would not have them do this to all other men indiscriminately; but only to those in whom they perceive that the defect which they see in themselves, does not exist. For, every man may be looked at in one of these two ways. We may consider in him what he possesses as a gift of God, and what he holds from himself. Whatever is defective in his character, is from himself; whatever is good and pertains to salvation and to perfection, is from God. Hence the Prophet Osee says: 'Destruction is thy own, O Israel, thy help is only in Me.'[2] Now, humility springs from the reverence which we have for God, inasmuch as seeing Him so great, so holy, so omnipotent, we dwindle down to mere nothingness in His presence. In consequence, therefore, of the respect which we have for God, each of us must subject to his fellow-man whatever qualities proceed from himself. But humility does not

[1] Philipp. ii. 3. [2] Osee xiii. 9.

require us to subject what we have from God, to that which in our neighbour appears to be from God. He who has received such gifts from God will clearly perceive that he is in possession of them, as is evident from the words of St. Paul: 'We have received not the spirit of this world, but the spirit that is of God: that we may know the things that are given us from God.'[1] Without prejudice, therefore, to humility, we may prefer those benefits which we have received from the bounty of God, to the gifts which that same God, in His infinite goodness, has bestowed upon others. Hence, the Apostle could say that he and his brother Apostles had a more sublime knowledge of God than was bestowed upon those who had preceded them: 'I have written, that reading you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which (knowledge) in other generations was not known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to His holy Apostles and Prophets in the Spirit.'[2]

Again; humility does not require us to subject what is from ourselves, to what in our neighbour is from himself. Otherwise it would be necessary for each to consider himself a greater sinner than any other, It is on this ground that St. Paul could say, without any detriment to the humility which he certainly possessed: 'We by nature are Jews, and not as the Gentiles—sinners.'[3] Nevertheless a man may, with perfect truth, both think and say that he is inferior to all other men, and that he is the greatest sinner; because he may think that there is in his neighbour some good which is not in himself or, that there is in himself some evil which is not in his neighbour; or, that if God had given to others the graces which He has bestowed upon himself, they would have made a better use of them and have become Saints. In this respect, therefore, he may, in deep humility, subject himself to all other men.

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [2] Ephes. iii. 3-5. [3] Galat. ii. 15.

## SECTION III.

### MOTIVES FOR HUMILITY.

NOW, if a man may thus put himself, by humility, under the feet of all others, what are the motives which will urge him to do so? First, there is the consideration of the emptiness and the worthlessness of that exaltation, which the soul covets with as much eagerness, and towards which it speeds with as great impetuosity, as a famished wolf rushes towards the tempting bait which has been laid to ensnare him. With some men this bait is a high position, or a place of trust in which they have power in their hands; they are under no superior; but rather they guide, direct, and give the law to others. With others it is a wish to be in the minds and the mouths of men; to be esteemed, praised and well spoken of. With others it is a desire to be thought clever, sharp, quick-witted; to have the reputation of being a deep thinker, a skilful organiser, a prudent ruler, a graceful writer, an eloquent preacher. But what is all this to a man who is truly wise? Does high position bring to men that contentment of mind which is erroneously supposed to be an essential part of it? Far from it. Those who reach the topmost round of the ladder of fame, are importuned and worried by those who seek for favours, till they are weary of life itself. They are burthened with anxieties which gnaw their hearts and give them no rest; they are thwarted, disappointed, angered and disobeyed by those over whom they thought to hold an easy sway. They find in the place which they were ambitious to reach, affliction of spirit, but no peace. Now if any man should gain the wish of his heart, and if he should be for a time, or for even his whole life, famous among his fellow-men, will this satisfy the craving of his heart? No; for, he will discover that the most illustrious men are not, by any means, the heroes that their own fond desires would have them to be. They are not, and they cannot be, so much in men's

minds, as they would desire. Their names and their deeds, it is true, are occasionally to be heard of; but only now and then are they, in a prominent manner, before the public; for men have far too much to think of that more nearly concerns themselves, to be always thinking of and speaking about the leading characters of the day. So that, after all, even the greatest men are very little either in the minds or upon the lips of their admirers.

Supposing that they were more frequently so, than experience teaches us that they are, of what advantage would it be to them? It will not ease their limbs of an ache, or lift an anxiety from their minds, or smooth away a pain, or bring any true, any lasting happiness to their hearts. The praise of men is as smoke. No substance is to be found therein; nothing that will feed, or sustain the soul, or fill up the void in the heart which ever craves for a something that earth can never give. Again; how pitiful is the reputation for intellectual ability which some men enjoy! What a reproach it must be to them when they are conscious that they have not that which men suppose them to possess! Of a truth, how shallow is the deepest thinker; what a child the most prudent; what a babbler the most eloquent, when they compare themselves with the really gifted men of the earth! How seldom is it that these epithets can be, with justice, applied to those upon whom an unreflecting and incompetent public thinks fit to bestow them! What folly, then, to covet them if we are not what we would have men take us to be; and what emptiness is to be found in them, even if we have some slender title to the reputation which they win for us; That reputation will not satisfy us; it cannot satisfy us; for, in it there is no solidity, no substance whereon the soul may feed. It is worthless; therefore, a wise man should not seek for these trifles, for these painted bubbles; he should crush down the aspiration of his appetite, and, by means of humility, subject it to right reason.

Another excellent motive for acting thus, is the thought that we are far more deserving of disgrace than of exaltation and of honour. Let a man look into the book of

conscience, and there read the long list of his transgressions against God, and he will not deem himself worthy of anything but of what is lowest and meanest. One who has grossly injured another, by betraying his trust, or by unfair dealing, or by slanderous words, cannot look him in the face. Still less does he expect from him respect and honour. So should it be with us when we consider our conduct towards God. Our ingratitude has been excessive. We have used the benefits of God in order to offend Him; we have squandered His patrimony in wickedness; and had He, as we deserved, cut us off in our sins, we should now be burning in hell, the sport and scorn of malignant devils, instead of enjoying the light of the sun, and the good things of the world, and the love and respect of our friends. This thought will spur us on to do that which is so galling to our human nature—to despise honour and the first seats at feasts, and salutations in the market-place, and to be called by men 'Master.' It will make us sit in the lowest place, and be glad to suffer contumely for the sake of Him Whom we have so foully dishonoured.

Again; we are the servants of God, and the fidelity which we owe to Him is a powerful motive to keep us in humility. All that we have is His. If we possess any power of mind, if it is tenacious of grasp, if it is keen, penetrating, and far-reaching, it is but a spark from His infinite intelligence. If our soul is full of lofty courage, if it has high and noble aims, if it scorns what is mean and base, if it is full of compassionate tenderness for the weaknesses and the shortcomings of others, these amiable qualities also are His gifts, and are but shadows of His magnanimous nature and of His unspeakable loving-kindness. Whatever we have in beauty of form, in rank, in wealth, in nobility of blood, all comes from Him. They are His talents, lent to us, to be used and traded with for His honour and glory, and for our utility. We are only the stewards of them, intrusted for a short time with their administration. Therefore, if instead of employing our Master's property for the purposes for which He gave it to us, we begin to look upon it as if it was our own, we are robbers, and we deserve the fate of

that wicked and idle servant, who, instead of trading with his master's money, squandered it in riotous living. He was cast into the dread prison-house, to be tortured for ever, amid those whose sole occupation it is to weep unavailingly, and to gnash their teeth in impotent rage.

Lastly, the love and the gratitude which we owe to God ought to make us humble ourselves in the dust, not only before Him, but before our fellow-men. He is Our Lord and Our God, and for our sake what has He not done? He became man, and to be man He had, as the Apostle says: 'To empty Himself, taking the form of a servant.'[1] See how He humbled Himself in order to do this! He was born in a stable; He endured all the helplessness and the miseries of childhood; He was brought up in poverty; He worked at a trade, and gained a scanty livelihood in the sweat of His brow. When he appeared before men as a teacher, the wise ones of the world called Him a fool; the leaders of the nation looked upon Him as a 'seditious demagogue; the priests, as a subverter of the Mosaic Law. He was accounted worse than a common malefactor, and at last was brought by the malignant hatred of a fanatical priesthood to the ignominious death of the Cross. All this humiliation He endured for us, that He might rid us of that inborn pride which made the first man aspire to be like unto God; that he might save us from the fearful evils which spring from it as from a poisonous source. Shall we not, then, love Him, and shall we not be grateful to him for His divine, infinite love and generosity? Shall we be proud, while He is thus humbled, and made the reproach of men and the outcast of His people? Surely, there is too much generosity, there is too much nobility in the human heart, to suffer it to be guilty of ingratitude so abominable! When that heart beholds God thus humbled, it will abhor pride, and will desire to be the last and least. It will give an attentive ear to the words of the Great Master, saying: 'Learn of Me to be humble,' and it will aspire to that true 'exaltation,' which, as our holy Father says, 'is won through the lowliness of this present life.'[2]

[1] Philipp. ii. 7. [2] Reg. St. Bened., Cap. 7.

# CHAPTER VI.

## *VOCAL PRAYER.*

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### SECTION I.

#### OF THE DIVINE OFFICE IN GENERAL

HAVING in the preceding chapters treated of what may be called the constituent parts of perfection, we now come to speak of the instruments with which we must labour, in order to acquire charity, purity of heart, and humility. The first of these instruments is prayer, which is defined to be 'an act of the practical reason, by which we ask God for whatever is either useful to or necessary for us; or it is an ascent, or lifting up of the mind and of the affections to Him.'[1] It is usually divided into vocal and into mental prayer. Prayer is called *mental*, when only the faculties of the soul are used in communing with God; and *vocal*, when the acts of the soul and its emotions find expression in words also. There are some writers who quarrel with this division, and say that it is inexact, inasmuch as its parts are coincident,[2] since all prayer that is worthy of the name is really mental. But though the division may lack somewhat of philosophical accuracy, yet its practical utility, as well as the fact that words, superadded to the acts and the emotions of the soul, constitute a something distinct from a purely mental process, will warrant us in adhering to the usual division. The difference between the two kinds of

[1] St. Thomas, II., q. 83, 1.

[2] Fr. Baker, O.S.B. Sancta Sophia, Prayer, Cap. 1, Sec. 9.

prayer may be illustrated by the difference between thought and speech. When we pray mentally, we are simply thinking in the presence of Our almighty Father, and laying before Him the thoughts of our soul. This is a purely spiritual, intellectual process, which carries with it the full force of the will, and which is unaided by the faculty of speech. But when we give expression to the thoughts stirring within us, and to the emotions of our hearts, there is superadded to the spiritual action of the soul a something material, which makes that action manifest, and gives to it an earthly existence.

The emotions, the wishes, and the aspirations of one soul may thus be drawn up into formulas of prayer, and made useful for others. Such for instance, are the Psalms of David and other portions of the Church's Liturgy, which we may call 'crystallised prayer;' the recitation of them goes by the name 'vocal prayer.' Anyone who makes use of them can then only be said to pray, when he applies the faculties of his soul to say them in such a way that 'mind and voice may be in accord.'[1] If the mind does not make the sentiments, the affections, and the petitions expressed by the words its own, they cease to be a prayer; they are nothing more than an empty formula. The difference between one who uses these formulas of prayer, and one who, in glowing words, gives expression to the thoughts and the affections of his heart, is precisely the same that exists between an orator, who from the abundance of his heart speaks what he has previously deeply meditated and duly arranged, and a man who, with painful effort, has committed a speech to memory, and delivers it with all the power and the earnestness of which he is master. The one speaks the sentiments of his own soul, and these issue from his lips instinct with life and vigour; the other, at the best, gives but a sort of galvanic life to that which has once already lived, and which can never live again endowed with all the strength and the beauty of its first existence.

[1] Reg. St. Bened., Cap. 19.

Chief among vocal prayers, and yielding in excellence only to the Liturgy of the Holy Mass, is the Divine Office, concerning the origin of which, the obligation to recite it, and the mode in which it is to be recited, we will now offer a few observations, which will, perhaps, be of service to those who are either aspiring to, or who already actually enjoy the privilege of daily joining in this grand vocal prayer of Holy Church.

The Canonical Hours are fixed public prayers which Ecclesiastics are bound to offer up to God, in virtue of a decree of the Sacred Canons. They are called *Hours*, because they must be said at certain and distinct hours of the day, and *Canonical*, because they are said according to the rules appointed by the Church. These Hours are known by a variety of names. Sometimes they are called the 'Divine Office,' because they are established for the worship of Almighty God; sometimes the 'Breviary,' because they are an abridgment of the Scriptures and of the Homilies of the Fathers, portioned out for each day of the year. In former times they were called the 'Ecclesiastical Course,' the 'Office,' the 'Psalter;' and our holy Father St. Benedict calls them 'the Work of God.' This Work of God, or the Divine Office, is made up of three chief parts—the Psalms, the hymns, and the prayers or collects—so called because in them the priest gathers all the wishes of the people, and offers them to God.

According to the present rite of the Church the number of the Canonical Hours is seven, namely Matins with Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. By saying these various Hours at the times fixed by the Church, the Ecclesiastic or the Religious is enabled to imitate the royal Psalmist who says of himself: 'Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee for the judgments of Thy justice;'[1] also he may commemorate in these Hours the chief mysteries of Our divine Lord's most bitter Passion, which are: His being bound with cords; His injurious treatment; His sentence of death; His Cruci-

[1] Ps cxviii. 164

fixion; the piercing of His side with a spear; His descent from the Cross; and His burial.[1]

The custom of chanting the Divine Office, and of praying to God according to some canonical rite or form, is said by some writers to have arisen in the days of St. Jerome, that is to say, at the end of the fifth or towards the beginning of the sixth century, during the Pontificate of Pelagius I. or of Pelagius II. But this is not correct; for, it goes back to a much earlier date. It can be traced to even apostolic times. St. Paul seems to allude to some such usage as this when he exhorts the Ephesians 'to speak to themselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord.'[2] Also St. Justin, in his Apology for the Christians, explains that, in the assemblies of the Faithful, none of the evil practices attributed to them by the heathen were ever perpetrated, but that they met together to pray to God, and to read lessons from the Prophets and the Apostles.[3] As early as the time of Trajan they used to celebrate their festivals before the dawn of day by singing praises to Christ.[4] St. Cyprian, in his treatise on Virginity, and St. Basil in his dissertation upon Rules, mention these services which, no doubt, were the germ of the Divine Office. It is needless to observe that all these writers were anterior to St. Jerome. In his day, however, and particularly some time after his death, the Office assumed a more developed form, and became a

[1] Because Lauds were, in former times, separated from Matins—and they may even still be separated in recitation—some have thought that they constitute an Hour by themselves, quite distinct from Matins; and, therefore, that the number of the Canonical Hours is eight. This opinion, however, is not tenable; for, the fact of their separation does not by any means prove that they are distinct from Matins; these latter were, themselves, in ancient times, portioned out into three watches, but that fact does not make them three instead of one of the Hours of the Divine Office. Moreover, although this separation of Lauds from Matins was the custom in some particular churches, yet in the Roman Church the two hours are always said conjointly, except on Christmas night.—Amalarius, Lib. de Ord; Hugo a. S. Victor, Lib. ii., De Offic, Cap. 9.

[2] Ephes. v. 19 [3] Justin, Apolog. 2 [4] Tertullian, Apolog., Cap. 2.

distinct rite in the Church. Before the middle of the fifth century, Cassian mentions, in connection with this rite, *antiphons*, *lessons*, and *collects*.[1] St. Isidore,[2] who was anterior to Cassian, speaks of *responsories*, which Valfridius in the twenty-fifth chapter of his book on 'Ecclesiastical Matters,' says were first introduced by St. Ambrose. Finally, Pope Gelasius, in a Council held at Rome in 490, drew up the Office almost in the very form in which we now have it.

## SECTION II.

### OBLIGATION OF RECITING THE DIVINE OFFICE.

AFTER these preliminary remarks, we may now proceed to inquire into the nature of the obligation to recite the Divine Office, and to see who those persons are upon whom this obligation rests. The obligation to recite the Divine Office does not arise from any divine law or ordinance. It derives all its binding power from ecclesiastical legislation only. In the nature of the Ecclesiastical State itself, there is nothing whatever to oblige those who enter it to recite the Office every day, any more than there is to recite it every week, or every month. For, if a priest is just as much a minister deputed to offer sacrifice, as a Cleric is to offer prayers, why should the obligation of doing that which is admitted by all to be an inferior act of religious worship be more stringent than is that of celebrating the divine mysteries? Yet, no priest is bound every day to offer the sacrifice of the Mass; and therefore, with far greater reason, no Cleric is bound daily to offer up the sacrifice of divine praise by the recitation of his Office. Of course, everyone will admit that a Cleric, by reason of his State, is bound to pray *oftener* than a layman, and that the recitation of the Divine Office is a duty very becoming to those who have dedicated themselves to the service of God; but with regard to the obliga-

[1] De Instit. Monach., Cap. 2, 6, 8 [2] De Offic., Lib. i., Cap. 8.

tion of the Office, nothing more than this can be inferred from the nature itself of the Ecclesiastical State. There cannot be found in Scripture or in the traditions of the Church, any divine, positive precept which imposes this burthen upon the ministers of the Altar. The use or custom of daily reciting the Cononical Hours seems to have become obligatory, in consequence of an ecclesiastical precept, about the end of the *fourth* century. Before the fourth Council of Carthage, held in the year 398, we find no law enforcing the recitation of them. In that Council, however a Canon (49) was framed, ordering all Clerics who should absent themselves from the Divine Office to be excommunicated, after being first deprived of their stipends. They incurred these penalties unless they could prove that they had a legitimate reason for not being present. It was, no doubt, in consequence of this decree that St. Jerome, who lived about this time, both spoke and wrote about the Office as an established service which had become binding upon those who had embraced the Religious Life as well as upon Ecclesiastics. Writing to Demetrius, he says: 'Besides the ordinary psalmody and prayer, wherein you have to exercise yourself at the third, the sixth, and the ninth hour, at eventide, at midnight, and at early dawn, fix for yourself the number of hours which you will devote to the study of Holy Scripture.' Also, in pursuance of the same decree, we find Pope Pelagius I., about the middle of the sixth century, or Pelagius II., towards its close, writing thus to Bishop Eleutherius: 'Compel the Clergy daily to apply themselves to the Divine Office.' The Council of Agatha, which was held in the year 506, speaks as if the Canonical Hours had, at that time, become a recognised portion of a priest's daily duty; for, one of its Canons runs thus: 'When the Matin Office is finished, let the priest perform his daily task by singing Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None; after these let him take care that at suitable hours, the remainder of the Office be publicly recited by himself or by his scholars.'

Again; in the time of our holy Father St. Benedict, the

Office constituted one of the chief duties of his monastic family ; for, when legislating for its recitation during the daytime, he says : ' " Seven times a day," saith the Prophet, " have I sung praises unto Thee ! "[1] This sacred number seven will be accomplished by us if at the times of Lauds,[2] Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Evensong and Complin we perform the office and duty of our service. It was of these Hours that the Prophet said ; " Seven times a day I have sung praise to Thee." For, of the Night-watches,[3] (or Matins) the same Prophet says : " At midnight I did arise to confess to Thee." At these times, therefore, let us give praise to our Creator for the judgments of His justice ; that is, at Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Evensong and Complin, and in the night let us rise to confess unto Him."[4]

## SECTION III.

### OF THOSE WHO ARE OBLIGED TO RECITE THE CANONICAL HOURS.

THE obligation to recite the Canonical Hours affects three classes of persons in the Church of God : beneficed clergymen, all who are in Sacred orders, and Religious who have taken solemn vows. Each of these titles, taken separately, is sufficient to impose the obligation ; and that obligation is binding in conscience under the penalty of mortal sin ; for, to set it aside, without a just cause, would be to transgress a grave precept of the Church. With respect to all who hold a benefice, the obligation is binding, whether they are in Holy Orders or not, not only by ecclesiastical precept, but in justice. Hence, if a beneficed clergyman, without a sufficient reason, omitted the Divine Office, not only would he incur the guilt of a mortal sin, but he would be obliged to restore the stipend corresponding to the Office, even before sentence had been given against him. This conclusion is evident from the words of the

[1] Ps. cxviii. 164. [2] *Matutini* in the Rule means Lauds.
[3] *Vigiliæ* in the Rule means Matins. [4] Reg. Cap. xvi.

following decrees: 'If any beneficed clergyman, six months after his installation, has not said the Divine Office, he shall not, unless he has been legitimately impeded, receive the stipends of the Offices which have been omitted, and this no matter, whether his benefice has the care of souls attached to it or not, but he shall be obliged to expend the money upon the poor, as being unjustly acquired. But if he contumaciously persist in the aforesaid negligence beyond the aforesaid time, he shall after due warning, be deprived of his benefice. for, it is given for the sake of the Office. Not to have said the Office twice during fifteen days is sufficient cause to deprive anyone of his benefice. But besides the above-named penalties, he who omits his Office will have to give to God an account of his omission.'[1]

The enactments of this decree are still further confirmed by the words of Pope Pius V., who, after citing a portion of it, proceeds thus: 'But as the minds of many may be in doubt as to what respect is to be paid to the aforesaid decree, we, in order more clearly and expressly to make provision for the matter, ordain that he who shall omit all the Canonical Hours for either one or more days, shall lose all the income of his benefice or benfices, corresponding to that day or days, if the division be made daily. He who shall omit Matins, shall lose half his income. Also, he who shall omit the rest of the Hours (Matins excepted), shall lose half. He who shall omit one of the Little Hours, shall lose a sixth part of his income due to that day. But if anyone who is bound to Choir, assists in Choir with the rest, without however, reciting with them, and then from the fact of his presence lays claim to the income and the distributions granted by the statutes, by custom, or foundation, or otherwise, let him understand that he not only loses the income and the distributions, but incurs the guilt of a mortal sin, just as he does, who, without any legitimate impediment, recites not the Divine Office for six months after entering upon his benefice.'[2]

What has been said will prove, though not quite clearly,

[1] 5 Concil. Later., Sess. ix. [2] Pius. V. In Bulla, 135. *Ex proximo.*

that all who have received Holy Orders, are bound under penalty of mortal sin to recite the Canonical Hours either in Choir or out of it. The weak point of the argument is that the above cited decrees speak of priests only and of those who hold ecclesiastical *benefices*. Nevertheless, though only these persons are specially mentioned, the general custom of the Church, which custom has the force of a law, has always understood the decrees to include those who are in Holy Orders strictly so called; for, Minor Orders, as all admit, do not impose any obligation to recite the Canonical Hours. The universal sentiment, then, of the Church is that those in Holy Orders are bound to recite the Divine Office. This obligation is evident from the fact that those who have these Orders daily recite the Canonical Hours, in spite of the inconvenience to which this service of prayer often subjects them; and because, if they neglect it, pious persons look upon them as guilty of a grave breach of duty. From these two things, theologians judge that a custom has the force of law. Hence, the Council of Bâsle evidently supposes the existence of some such law, when it says: 'The holy Synod admonishes beneficed Clergymen, and those in Holy Orders, since they are bound to the recitation of the Hours, etc.'[1]

Moreover, it is but reasonable that men who are consecrated to the divine worship should apply themselves to the Office, which is one of the noblest parts of it; also that those who are appointed to the sacred service of the Altar, should recite the public prayers of the Church. This obligation binds those who are in Holy Orders, even if they have been degraded, or if they are suspended, or excommunicated, or condemned to penal servitude, or imprisoned, but, of course, only as far as their condition will permit. Even those who, during the troublous times of the French Revolution, married wives, and who were afterwards suffered by papal dispensation to retain them, even they were bound to the Office, unless specially dispensed from this obligation also; for, the foundation of the

[1] Sess. xxi

obligation—namely, the Sacred Orders which they had received, remains for ever. It begins from the moment the Sacred Order is conferred, or a benefice is given, and lasts till either physical or moral inability suspends it for a time, or till death for ever frees men from its yoke.

Not only beneficed clergymen and those in Holy Orders are bound under penalty of mortal sin to recite the Divine Office, but all Religious, whether men or women, who are professed for the Choir. If they do not, in the public Choir, perform this duty of their State, they are bound, at least privately to perform it. This obligation cannot be so solidly proved as can the preceding one—except from custom which has the force of a law. For, there is no positive law imposing upon them this obligation, because, if any such existed, it could easily be discovered. Nor is there any natural, or any *quasi*-natural law, arising from the very nature of the Religious State itself, and obliging its members to the Canonical Hours. For, such law, if it existed at all, would owe its origin to the fact either that the Religious are maintained by the alms and the gifts of the Faithful, or that by their religious profession itself they are appointed for the work of the Choir. Now, if the first supposition were true, only some few Religious Orders would be bound to the Office; for, not all, or nearly all, subsist upon alms, or upon the benefactions of pious founders. Even if they did, that circumstance would not impose upon them the duty of reciting the Divine Office; for, these alms are bestowed by the Faithful, and these pious foundations are made not that the Religious may recite the Divine Office, but that they may be helped in their poverty. If the foundation were made for the express purpose of having the Divine Office recited, the Religious would then be *beneficed*, and their obligation would derive its origin from another source, as well as from their state as Choir Religious. But all Religious professed for the Choir fall under the obligation of the Canonical Hours, and therefore, this obligation cannot derive its origin from the alms bestowed by the Faithful, or from the munificence of bene-

factors. Again; the simple fact of Religious profession does not impose the obligation of reciting the Office in Choir. This obligation is satisfied by the Community's public recitation of the Canonical Hours; but the individual members of that Community are not affected by that obligation; just as in military and in preaching Orders, the duty of campaigning or of preaching falls upon the body, without affecting the individual members of whom it is composed.

We have said that the obligation of reciting the Canonical Hours falls upon *all* Religious, because even those who are suspended, or excommunicated, or in penal servitude, or in prison, and those also who for their misconduct are thrust out of the monastery, are nevertheless still under the binding power which imposes upon them the duty of the Divine Office. For, although the Religious Profession does not of its own nature impose this obligation, yet it is the source whence springs that universal custom which has, throughout the Church, the force of law. This conclusion, however, would not hold good in the case of those who are dispensed from their vows and allowed to marry; for, when once that concession has been made by lawful authority, the persons in whose favour it is made cease to be Religious.

Again; we have said, '*all solemnly professed Religious*,' because those who are in simple vows are not bound privately to recite the Office, except by the rules of the monastery in which they happen to be living; they ought, however, to be present in Choir at the public recitation of it.[1] Also, Novices are exempt from this obligation, because, though comprised in all favourable matters under the title 'Religious', they do not incur the burthens of the Religous Life. Furthermore, only those Religious *professed for the Choir*[2] are bound to the Office. Hence, all

[1] Acta. Super. Stat. Reg., Dubia, I. 75.

[2] This clause exempts from the Office, the Teutonic Knights, the Knights of Malta, and Jesuits who have not yet received Holy Orders. These, and all Lay Brothers, are not bound to say the prayers imposed

Lay Brothers and Lay Sisters are exempt, for they are received into Religious Communities to assist the members of them in the menial offices of the house and in manual labour.

## SECTION IV.

### FORM OF RECITING THE DIVINE OFFICE.

In the year 1568, Pius V. ordained that the form of reciting the Divine Office should be that which is drawn up in the present Roman Breviary. With this, all were obliged to conform, unless they had been accustomed to use for the recitation of the Divine Office a rite which went back for, at least, two centuries before that date—that is to say, to the year 1368. In consequence of this decree, each is obliged to adhere to the rite drawn up in the Breviary which he is bound to use. He must follow with respect to times, days and festivals the division which it prescribes; and if he depart from this order to follow his own whim, even if it were only once, he will incur the guilt of a mortal sin of disobedience. But if the change which he makes be only slight, it will not be anything more grievous than a venial sin, even if it be made without a cause; for, any such change would not be a notable departure from the mind of the Church.[1]

If it should ever happen that a Regular who does not use the Roman Breviary should find that he has not his own with him, it is the more probable opinion that he would satisfy his obligation by reciting the Secular Office, both because the precept which obliges him to recite the Canonical Hours is more strict than that which directs him to recite them in some particular way; and because it certainly is not the Pope's intention to exempt Religious from the obligation of saying the Divine Office, whenever

upon them instead of the Office, under the same penalty under which solemnly professed Religious are bound to the Office, but only under the penalty assigned to a transgression of the rules or of the constitutions.

[1] Cajetanus, Navarrus, *et alii.*

they happen not to have their Breviaries with them especially if there is another at hand, even though that other may not happen to be in accordance with the rite which they are obliged to follow. Besides, reason itself tells us that, when we are able to pay part of a debt, we are obliged in conscience to do so, even though we may not be able to pay the whole.

There is another question about which there used to be some discussion: it is whether a Religious, when not in Choir, would satisfy his obligation by reciting the Roman Office? Lessius and Henno thought it probable that he would; but the vast majority of other theologians think that he would not; and they support their opinion by this decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites: 'Those who have a Breviary which goes back for two hundred years before that which was published by Pius V., do not satisfy their obligation, even when they are out of Choir, by reciting their Office according to the rite ordered by the Pope, unless that rite has been received in their Church with the consent of the Bishop and the Chapter.[1]

The time at which the Canonical Hours should be recited may be regarded either as it was arranged when these were first made part of the Liturgy, or as the custom of the Church at the present day has disposed it. With respect to the first, it must be observed that the day is of two kinds—*natural*, containing twenty-four equal hours, beginning at the middle of the night, and going on till the middle of the following night; and *artificial*, containing twelve hours from the rising till the setting of the sun. In like manner there is an artificial night containing twelve hours—from sunset till sunrise. The hours of this night are shorter in summer, longer in winter; and the hours of this day are shorter in winter, and longer in summer. The *artificial* day is divided into four equal parts or quarters. Three hours of the first quarter are called Prime; three hours of the second quarter are called Tierce; three hours of the third are called Sext; and three hours of the fourth

[1] Garcia, De Benef., Cap. 1, No. 155.

are called None. Hence, one liturgical hour contains three hours of the artificial day: Prime, beginning with sunrise; Tierce, beginning with the end of the third artificial hour; Sext, with the end of the sixth—that is, about mid-day; and None, at the end of the ninth. In like manner the artificial night is portioned out into four quarters, each of which contains three hours, either shorter or longer, according as the sun either rises earlier or sets later. These are called *Vigiliæ*, or night watches. The first begins at sunset; the fourth ends at sunrise. It is to these watches that Our Lord refers when He says: 'And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.'[1] A watch, therefore, may be called the fourth part of the night: the first begins at Vespers; the second touches upon midnight; the third extends to cock-crowing; the fourth ends at sunrise.

In the early ages, the Canonical Hours were recited at the times indicated by their names: Prime, the first sacred hour of the artificial day, at about six o'clock in the morning during the equinoxes, but earlier in summer, and later in winter; Tierce, at the third hour, or about nine o'clock; Sext, at the sixth hour, or about mid-day; None, at the ninth hour, or about three o'clock in the afternoon; Vespers and Complin, at the first watch, or after sunset. The Hour which we now call Matins, or the three Nocturns, was recited at the second, third, and fourth watches.

Hence the day Hours are: Lauds with Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None; the night Hours are: Vespers, Complin, and the three Nocturns or Matins. In some Churches, Lauds were looked upon as morning prayers, and, therefore, were recited at the first hour of the day, before Prime; but in others, and especially in the Roman Church, they were joined with the Nocturns. At the present time, however, the custom of the Church varies considerably as to the hour at which the Office should be recited. Only in some monasteries are Matins and Lauds recited at midnight; in

[1] St. Luke xii. 38.

cathedral and in collegiate churches, in the early morning. In some places they are said on the preceding day before sunset; Prime, at sunrise; Tierce and Sext, at nine o'clock; None, at mid-day; Vespers, at two or at three; and Complin at sunset.[1]

This arrangement of time must be adhered to in Choir, according to the custom of each Church, and any notable anticipation or any notable postponement might be grievous, because of the scandal to which it might give rise, and of the hindrance which it might put in the way of the people's devotion. Even in private recitation of the Office it is good and praiseworthy to conform with the time at which it is recited in Choir; but there is no obligation to do so. Theologians, in this matter, go so far as to say that, provided the whole Office, beginning with Matins, is recited within the four-and-twenty hours—that is, from midnight till the following midnight—there is no fault; because the substance of the precept is observed. Nevertheless, they are of opinion that it would be a venial sin to defer without cause, Matins and Lauds, Prime, Tierce, and Sext, till after mid-day, or to anticipate the time for Vespers and Complin by reciting them before mid-day. If, however, there be a just cause either for anticipating or for deferring the Office, there will be no sin at all.

With regard to reciting Matins and Lauds on the day before the feast, St. Thomas says: 'If anyone, after having recited Vespers and Complin, shall then go on to say Matins and Lauds for the following day, he satisfies his obligation; because the day of the Ecclesiastical Office and of the festival begins at Vespers. But if this be done through mere wantonness, in order to give himself up more conveniently to sleep or to amusement, it will not be free from sin. However, if any lawful necessity requires it, as, for instance, when a Cleric or a Professor must either at night or in the morning read or study his lecture, he may, without incurring any sin, recite Matins over-night, and in the other Hours anticipate the regular times, as is the

[1] Layman, De Horis Canon.

practice in some Churches; because it is better to give both things to God—namely, due praise and other services—than that one of these should be hindered by the other.'[1] But since his time, there has sprung up in the Church a custom which even the most scrupulously minded follow without hesitation; this is to recite either Matins and Lauds, or Matins only, on the day preceding the festival. For a decree from Rome specifies at what time in the afternoon it is lawful to begin Matins, and points out that this may be done when the sun has completed half his course between mid-day and sunset; so that, if the sun rises and sets at the sixth hour, Matins for the following day may be begun at three o'clock in the afternoon. If it rises at eight, and sets at four, they may be said at two in the afternoon.

To invert without cause the order of the Canonical Hours is, without doubt, a venial sin; because it is to transgress in a slight matter a command of the Church. Any reasonable cause, however, will excuse from all fault every such inversion. If, for instance, a person happens not to have his Breviary with him, but if he has a Diurnal in which the Little Hours are contained, he may recite them before reciting Matins. Or, again, if he were asked by a companion to join him in saying the Office for the following day, and if he himself had not yet begun the Little Hours for the day itself, he might, without scruple, join his friend in reciting the morrow's Office. Also, if a person should happen to come to Choir, and should find that the singers are chanting Sext, whereas he has not yet begun Prime, he may join them, and he is even counselled to join them in that part which they are performing, and then afterwards to recite the portion which he has omitted.

According to the rubric of the Roman Missal, it is not lawful for a priest to say Mass before he has recited Matins and Lauds. This rubric is the result of a custom which has the force of law in the Church, in consequence of that

[1] St. Thomas, Quodl. V., a. 28.

rule laid down by St. Augustine: 'In those matters, concerning which nothing has been determined by the Sacred Scriptures, the custom of God's people and the injunction of the ancients must be held to be law.'[1] Therefore, to set this aside, without some just cause, is sinful, inasmuch as it is a want of due deference and submission to lawful authority. In order, then, to restrain all who might be tempted to contemn this ecclesiastical ordinance, Innocent IV., in a letter to Otto, Cardinal Bishop of Tusculum, says: 'Let priests say the Canonical Hours in the usual way; but let them not presume to celebrate Mass before having finished their Matin Office.' But in this, as in the preceding case, any just cause will excuse a priest from fault. For, as most theologians teach, the omission of Matins and Lauds, before the celebration of Mass, would not exceed the guilt of a venial sin; because this inversion of order with respect to the Matin Office and to Mass does not seem to be more grave in its nature than is that of the Hours with respect to one another; and as this latter is, by the admission of all, a venial fault, so also is the former.

## SECTION V.

### OF THE COMPLETION AND OF THE INTERRUPTION OF THE HOURS.

THE same law that prescribes the recitation of the Canonical Hours ordains that they should be said completely. The reason is that the Church does not order a mutilated Office, but one that is entire in all its parts. Hence, if anyone shall culpably omit a notable part of them in the same Hour, or in the different Hours of the same day, he is guilty of a mortal sin. But what is a notable part? Amid the various and conflicting opinions of theologians, this is a difficult matter to determine; but it is a probable and generally received opinion that the omission of one

[1] Epist. 36 ad Casulanum.

Little Hour, or of a part equivalent to it, is something notable; because, though it is not deemed notable with respect to the whole Office, yet it is notable in itself, and when looked at with respect to the intention of the Church. Observe that we have said: 'In the same Hour, or in the different Hours of the same day,' because many slight omissions, even in different Hours, may make up a notable part, the omission of which is quite sufficient to constitute a mortal sin. For, just as a man may easily sin mortally against the precept of fasting by frequently eating a little food upon a fast day, but nevertheless he does not sin mortally if he eats a little food on many *different* fasting days; so also anyone who omits several parts of his Office on the same day may easily sin mortally, if these little omissions constitute a notable part, but yet he does not sin mortally if the slight omissions occur on various different days. The reason of this is that the precept of fasting, like the precept of saying the Office, is limited to the day itself; and when the day has passed, the obligation for that day ceases with it. Hence, anyone who has omitted an Hour, or a part equivalent to an Hour, is not obliged to satisfy for that on the following day. All that he can do is to be sorry for it, and to perform that penance which his Confessor shall enjoin.

With respect to unavoidable omissions, such as usually take place when bells have to be rung, or candles have to be lighted, or incense has to be brought in, authors are of opinion that no account is to be made of them; because the Choir, of which the persons engaged in these functions are members, is a sort of mystical body, and it is supposed to make good any deficiency which may have occurred on their part during the performance of these necessary duties.[1] This conclusion would hold good, we think, in the case of matters which cannot be conveniently arranged before the Office begins, and provided that those who are obliged to attend to them follow, as far as possible, the recitation of the others. Nevertheless, if these persons are frequently,

[1] Billuart, De Horis Canon.

and for any length of time, occupied about these duties, and if in consequence of their occupation, they omit something notable in the same Hour, we think that the omission should be supplied afterwards.[1]

Those who are voluntarily distracted, and who in consequence of their distraction omit what is called a notable part, are bound to supply that omission. This will hold good in the case of those who take up the verse of the Psalm before the opposite Choir has finished that which is assigned to it; also of those who, while reciting, mutilate the Office by stammering, by clipping, by cutting or by swallowing their words, unless they be excused on account of some defect which has not been culpably contracted. There are, however, some authors who remark that those who offend in this way be rarely guilty of a mortal sin, unless the anticipation, the cutting, the swallowing, and the rest, are very great.[2]

As the Vespers for Holy Saturday are very short, and as they are not equivalent to any of the Little Hours usually said during the year, a question is raised as to whether the omission of them would constitute a grievous sin. Some authors maintain that it would; because they are an entire Hour, and because the complete number of Hours falls under the precept. Others, however, and with a greater show of probability, deny this, and contend that, notwithstanding the two reasons alleged by those who hold the contrary opinion, the Vespers of Holy Saturday being but a slight matter, the omission of them is not a mortal sin; because in these ordinances slight matter is to be held as nothing, and excuses from grave sin.

Again; we may ask whether one who omits either all the Hours, or many of them in one day, commits either one sin or many sins? It is the more common and more probable opinion that he commits but one sin, either more or less grave according as the Hours omitted are either many or few. The reason given is that although the Hours are prescribed, yet they are not prescribed by distinct precepts,

[1] This is not of strict obligation. [2] Bonacina, Lessius, *et alii*.

but by one precept which commands the recitation of one entire Office. Nevertheless, anyone who omits the Hours might easily be guilty of several mortal sins, by often during the day renewing his intention to omit them, after having often recalled it.

With respect to the actual recitation of the Office, it must ever be borne in mind by all who are obliged to say it, that they do not satisfy their obligation by a mental reading of it;[1] because it is a vocal prayer, and for that reason the Council of Bâsle[2] orders Clerics to say the Hours: 'Not in the throat, or between the teeth, or by eating and clipping the words and the sentences, but, whether they are alone or in company with others, reverently to perform this duty of service, by distinctly pronouncing the words.' But what is meant by 'distinctly pronouncing the words'? How shall we determine the amount of vocal pronunciation which will satisfy this order of the Council? Suarez requires it to be such as that one may be able to hear one's self 'ut teipsum audire possis;' La Croix, Castropalao and others, 'that one may be able to hear one's self, unless there is some hindrance; because words which cannot be perceived by the sense of hearing are hardly words at all; they are rather a commencement of words, which commencement is made, either in the throat or within the teeth.' Is there, then, no medium kind of vocal pronunciation between that which one may hear, and that which is made in the throat and within the teeth? St. Alphonsus thinks that there is; for, he says: 'There may be a vocal pronunciation, although the person reciting may not be able to hear himself; that is to say, there is a vocal pronunciation when the words and the syllables have been formed by their organs in such a way that if the words were rendered separately sensible, each would be an articulate human word.' Therefore a recitation of the Divine Office made in this way will satisfy the obligation of the law. Hence, there is no obligation to hear one's self.

[1] St Alphonsus holds the opposite opinion as *more probable* for Religious in private recitation (Lib. V., præcept. particular., No. 64).

Cap. Qualiter Horæ recit.

If anyone through sickness, or the loss of his Breviary, or the performance of some necessary duty, is unable to recite the whole Office, but is able to recite a part, he is bound to recite that part. If it is but one Little Hour, he must say it; for each Hour falls under the ecclesiastical precept. Hence, Innocent XI. condemned the following proposition ? ' He who cannot recite Matins and Lauds, but who is able to recite only the rest of the Little Hours, is bound to nothing, because the greater part draws the lesser to itself.' If he can recite a notable part either of one of the greater or of one of the Little Hours, it is the more probable opinion that he is bound to recite that portion ; because a precept which cannot be completely fulfilled ought to be complied with as far as possible, when the obligation is divisible. Thus, one who cannot fast altogether, ought at least to abstain from eating meat, if he is able to do so. If he cannot fast the whole Lent, he ought to fast on certain days, and as often as he can. Again ; he who owes a hundred pounds which he is unable to pay, ought to pay ten, if he can do so ; because the reason which excuses him from paying the whole sum does not excuse him from paying that part which he is able to return to his creditors. Consequently, if a person bound to recite the Divine Office is sick, or if he has not a Breviary, and he is able to recite either by heart, or with the aid of the Diurnal, either Matins, or any of the other Hours, he is bound in conscience to do so. But if he is able to recite only some slight portion of any Hour, such as a Psalm, or a hymn, or a prayer, he is not bound in conscience to do that, because such an obligation would give rise to great perplexity and to endless scruples, since there are few sick men that cannot recite some slight portion, and it would be difficult for any one to determine how much he is able to recite.

Again ; it may be asked, whether one who cannot when alone recite the Office, is bound to procure a companion to recite it with him. Before answering the question we may assume it to be an undisputed fact that it is quite

lawful for him to have a companion for this purpose, no matter whether that companion is a Cleric or not, provided only that he recites the Office alternately with his companion, and that the portion recited by him is heard by the person with whom he is reciting. This is evident from the fact that such is the common custom of the Church; it is a law introduced for the convenience of all; it is not a privilege granted only to a few. Hence, the hearing of the Office in such cases is substituted for the recitation of it; and the vocal prayer of the one becomes the prayer also of the other who hears him. This holds good in the case of all other prayers, even though we are by vow obliged to say them, or they have been imposed upon us as a sacramental penance. It must be observed, however, that this recitation of the Office must be made in alternate verses, otherwise the obligation will not be satisfied. As in the public performance of the Office, the obligation is satisfied if one person reads all the Lessons, Responses, and Antiphons, while the rest do nothing but listen, provided only that the Psalms are said in alternate verses, so also will it hold good if the same method be followed in private recitation. But as the obligation would not be satisfied if one side of the Choir said one Psalm, and the other said the next, allowing the opposite Choir to rest in the meantime, so also the same method will not suffice or satisfy in private recitation. The reason of this is that the custom of the Church does not sanction such a proceeding in the fulfilment of the duty of divine praise. Moreover, it is necessary that those who recite alternately should hear what is said by the opposite Choir, because, as both Choirs are bound to the whole Office, not only each must accomplish the part which falls to its lot, but each must listen to what is said by the Choir which is sharing the burthen with it. Hence, it is the opinion of Billuart that a deaf man who is able by himself to recite the Office, would not satisfy his obligation by reciting it with a companion, but that he would satisfy his obligation if he recited Office in Choir. He gives two reasons for this distinction: first, because being bound to

Choir (as is supposed), the Church does not wish him to say his Office twice. Secondly, because being a member of a mystical body, the prayer of that body is considered to be the prayer of each member who does not voluntarily put an obstacle in the way. Nevertheless, it is the commonly received opinion of authors who have written upon the Canonical Hours, that those who assist in Choir satisfy their obligation, even though they may not be able to hear all that is said by the opposite Choir, either through the weak voices of its members, or on account of some noise which drowns them, provided however, that they attend, as best they can, to what is being recited.

After these preliminary remarks, we may now proceed to examine the question proposed: 'Is he who cannot when alone recite the Office, obliged to procure a companion to recite it with him?' It is the commonly received opinion that he is bound to procure a companion, if he can conveniently do so, because laws which can conveniently be kept bind us, and we are obliged to use human diligence to keep them. It seems at first sight that the advantage of having a companion with us to share in the burthen of the Office is a privilege; and it might be urged that no one is obliged to make use of a privilege, according to the well-known legal axiom. A moment's reflection, however, will suffice to destroy this illusion, because it is the distinctive feature of a privilege that it should be granted to only a few; but this advantage is accorded by a common law which was introduced by custom, and which may, therefore, be used by all indiscriminately. But granting that it is a favour and a privilege in the case of those who, when by themselves, are able to satisfy the obligation, it is not a privilege, but a precept, in the case of those who are not. For, when the Church commands the recitation of the Hours, she also implicitly orders us to employ the means by which that command may be easily carried into effect; and especially when, as in the case of which we are speaking, the law would become more easy of observance. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that, in stating the

obligation to procure a companion, the clause, 'if he can conveniently do so,' has been introduced. This means either that a companion freely offers himself, or that he easily gives his assent when asked to assist in the recitation of the Hours. But if a companion cannot be procured except with great difficulty, or if no one will lend his help without a stipend for so doing, then the person who cannot when alone satisfy his obligation, is considered to be altogether released from it. Nevertheless, if his benefice were a very rich one, he would be obliged to pay some person to help him in the recitation of the Divine Office.

It is the custom in some Churches to supply by the music of the organ, certain parts of the Liturgy. Thus at Vespers, for example, the Choir sings one verse of a Psalm, and the organ, unaccompanied by the voices, plays the music of the next. A question, therefore, arises whether there is any obligation on the members of the Choir to supply these omissions. Some writers have maintained that there is none whatever; because the music of the organ is a substitute for the voices of the Choir. This, however, is not quite clear. It is, therefore, a safer and more probable opinion that the portions of the Liturgy which are omitted, and their places supplied by the music of the organ, should be recited in a low tone by certain members of the Choir, or in a loud tone by one person, who represents the whole body.

It may sometimes happen that while a person is reciting the Office, he is called away, and is thus obliged to interrupt it for a few moments, or for even a considerable length of time; it will therefore be necessary to know the opinion of theologians with respect to these interruptions, and also with respect to those for which there is no other reason than the will of the person who is reciting the Canonical Hours. Many authors are inclined to believe that notably, and without cause to interrupt any of the Hours—except Matins, by the separation of Lauds—is at the least a venial fault; because, as they very reasonably

observe, just in the same way as anyone would be considered irreverent who should interrupt his conversation with a king, in order to attend to trifles, so also would a man be guilty of irreverence to God, if, without cause, he should interrupt his prayer or conversation with Him, in order to apply his mind to anything which might easily be put off till a more suitable time.

With respect to their judgment about the interruption of Matins, by their separation from Lauds, they assign this reason, that there is no law, either natural or positive, which prohibits such a separation, especially as each Psalm, each hymn, each prayer, and even each verse, has by itself, and independently of the others, a complete sense, being prayer, or praise, or instruction. For this reason many writers maintain that it is no sin at all to interrupt a Little Hour, or even a Psalm, if there is any rational cause for so doing. The reason why an exception is made in the case of Matins with respect to Lauds, is that although they are considered to be one Canonical Hour, yet it has become the practice, even among men of timorous conscience, to separate them without any cause whatever. Not a few authors think, and that, too, with a certain amount of probability, that even the Nocturns may, without a cause, be separated from one another, provided only that the time between each of them does not exceed the space of three hours ;[1] because, as many of the Fathers teach, such was the practice of the primitive Church. Any slight interruption in the Hours is counted as nothing, and with any rational or honest reason is free from all fault whatever.

[1] For a reasonable cause the Nocturns may be separated from one another for any length of time within the four-and-twenty hours of the liturgical day (St. Alphonsus, Lib. V., Nos. 166 and 167).

## SECTION VI.

### OF THE INTENTION AND THE ATTENTION REQUISITE FOR THE RECITATION OF THE HOURS.

THESE two words, by reason of their similarity in sound, are often taken by some persons to mean the same thing. They are however, quite different from each other, as will immediately be perceived, if we give to each its proper definition. Intention is an act of the will, by which a man purposes to do something. Attention is an act of the intellect, by which it considers or brings the mind to advert to something. When a man intends to perform any act, he may intend to do it in three ways; hence, there are three kinds of intention.

First, he may, for instance, intend to go to Paris, and with this end in view make all necessary arrangements for his journey. He will furnish himself with a sufficient sum of money, depart from his home, and travel to the Continent, till at last he finds himself in the capital of France. When he came to the determination of undertaking this journey, and set about making the arrangements for it, his intention was *actual—implicity* actual, if he did this and stated not his intention in so many words; *explicity* actual, if he said to himself or to anyone else: 'I intend to go to Paris.'

The force or impetus left in his will by this intention, and in consequence of which his purpose was carried into effect, is called the *virtual* intention. This is considered to last throughout the work which anyone begins, no matter how much he may in the meantime be occupied or distracted by other things, provided only that the first or actual intention is not recalled. Hence, though our traveller on his way to Paris may divert himself by reading, or by admiring the scenery of the country through which he is passing, or by conversing with his fellow-travellers, yet his first intention virtually perseveres, and lives till he either altogether

changes it, or, after having accomplished his purpose, makes another totally different intention.

If, however, his business is of such a nature that he is obliged to go to Paris, as a matter of course, every month, then his intention would in time be called *habitual*, or that which is the result of an oft-repeated act, the nature of which is to leave in the mind a certain propensity to do something, with which custom has made it familiar. This may be found in those who are asleep, or intoxicated, or who have lost their reason, and who, in consequence of habit, speak certain words, and do certain actions, which they were accustomed to do when they were awake, or sober, or in their right mind. Intention, therefore, may exist, in any man in one of these three ways: it may be actual, it may be virtual, it may be habitual.

Now, with respect to those who are bound to recite the Canonical Hours, we may say, in the first place, that they are obliged to recite them with *some* intention of praying to and of worshipping God. For, the recitation of the Canonical Hours, as ordered by the Church, is an act of religion, namely, of prayer to and of worship of God. Such is the common opinion of all men, and such is the tenor of all the Canons by which the performance of this duty of religious worship is ordered. But in itself the recitation of the Canonical Hours is not an act that is essentially a worship of God. Men may read, or may recite them, out of mere curiosity, or in order to study them as a literary work. Therefore, to make them an act of religious worship, something more is requisite than the mere perusal or the mere recitation of them. That something is the intention of him who recites.

That intention, which is called *habitual*, will not suffice, because it does not constitute a human act—that is to say, an act proceeding from a man's deliberate will, with his full advertence to its goodness or to its malice. Intention which is called *virtual* will suffice, in the course of the recitation, because it is not possible for a man to keep up an *actual* intention throughout the whole Office, however

much he may wish to do so. Therefore, as virtual intention presupposes actual intention, it is requisite for the recitation of the Divine Office that an *actual* intention of worshipping God thereby should have been formed, at some time or other, at least implicity, for, it is not requisite that we should say, when we are about to recite our Office: 'I now intend to recite the Canonical Hours; but it suffices that, when about to satisfy this obligation, or when mindful of it, we should go to Choir, or if we are about to recite it privately, should take up our Breviary, and, by reciting it, perform our accustomed task of service to God; for, in these actions there is included the intention of praying to and of worshipping Him. Hence, Navarre says: 'He who looks for, or takes up his Breviary with the express purpose of reciting it as he ought, or who, with a deliberate mind, takes his Breviary and goes to the church, or does anything of this kind, so that if asked why he does it, he would be able to answer. "In order to recite my Office, or to satisfy my obligation," this man, I say, has a sufficient intention or purpose of praying, since the Church orders the recitation of the Hours by way of prayer.'[1]

The fact that there are in the Breviary many things which are neither prayers nor praises of God, such as the histories related in the Psalms and in the lessons, in no way militates against our conclusion, for though they are not in themselves the praises of God, yet they may be uttered to the praise of God, inasmuch as they have been revealed by Him, or have been either said or done by the Saints in order to honour Him.

So much, then, for the intention requisite for the Divine Office. We now come to speak of the *attention* necessary for it, or of that act of the intellect by which a man adverts to something. In the case of a vocal prayer, such as the Divine Office is, that advertence or attention may be threefold; a person may attend to the words in order not to make any mistake in the pronunciation of them, and

[1] De Oratione et Hor. Can., Cap. xiii. No. 6.

this is called *superficial;* or to the *sense*, in order to grasp the meaning of them, this is called *literal;* or, finally, to God, or to the thing asked for, or to anything else pertaining to God, and this is called *spiritual.* Each of these kinds of attention may be actual, or virtual, or habitual. It is *habitual* when it is merely an inclination to attend, such as may be found in those who are asleep; *actual* when, in fact, it does advert to the words, to the sense, or to God; *virtual* when, by force of a previous intention to attend, it is thought to persevere, as we have already explained. From what has been said thus far, it will be evident that habitual attention will not suffice for the Office; that actual is not essential; but that virtual is required and that it will suffice.

With these preliminary ideas clearly before our minds, we may now draw some conclusions. The first is, that the best kind of attention, for satisfying the obligation of the Canonical Hours is either a literal attention, that is, to the sense of the words, or a spiritual attention, that is, to God, or to that which pertains to Him. Every one should strive to have either the one or the other of these kinds of attention. Nevertheless, if the intention of praying to and of worshipping God exists, at least virtually, in the mind of anyone who recites the Divine Office, he will satisfy his obligation, even though his attention be but superficial, that is, directed to not committing any error in the pronunciation of the words. Observe, however, that we suppose him to have the intention of praying to and of worshipping God; for if he have not this, no matter how great his attention may be rightly to pronounce the words, he will not satisfy his obligation; for as the recitation of the hours is in itself an indifferent matter, that is to say, a matter which may be performed for recreation, or for study, or for curiosity, it does not become an act of prayer to or of worship of God until there exists this intention which makes it so. But the intention of worshipping God, together with attention to the words being supposed, there straightway exists at least an implicit attention to

God, consequently there is an act of religion; and there is a prayer, as far as substance is concerned.

Nobody, we think, will gainsay this conclusion; for, the ordinances of the Church on this point seem to require nothing more; and if they did, it would be impossible for many Communities of Nuns, who know not the Latin language, to satisfy their obligation, for, they cannot say their Office in any other way. Hence, St. Thomas after noting the various kinds of attention which may exist, goes on to say: 'If any of these kinds of attention is in a prayer, that prayer must not be considered inattentive; hence, those who do not understand the meaning of the words of prayer, can yet be attentive to the prayer.'[1] From these words it must not be inferred that the Angelic Doctor teaches that such an attention is not requisite as is necessary in order to perform the entire Office without omitting anything. All he means to say is, that formal and express attention to the words is not necessary, provided that the integrity of the Office is preserved. Also, when in another place he says that spiritual attention is *especially necessary*, he means nothing more than that prayer must be made with the intention of worshipping God, which is a kind of implicitly spiritual attention.[2]

What has been said thus far is commonly enough admitted by most authors. There is, however, a divergence of opinion among them about *internal* attention. Some of them make a distinction between that which is external and that which is internal. On the part of the person who recites, external devotion is nothing more than an outwardly modest comportment which excludes actions that would hinder internal attention, although he may all the while be voluntarily distracted. All without exception agree that this is necessarily required for the recitation of the Hours, in order to satisfy the precept. Hence, we infer that those who, while reciting, perform any actions which either of their own nature, or through the weakness of the human intellect, are incompatible with internal attention,

[1] St. Thomas, II. ii., Quæst. lxxxiii., a. 14 [2] Art. 13.

do not satisfy their obligation. Such actions are, reading other subjects, painting, writing, talking with others, while the opposite choir is reciting, and the like. On the other hand, we may infer that those persons *do* satisfy the precept, or, at least, that they do not sin mortally, who, while reciting, perform actions which either do not at all, or only very slightly, disturb internal attention. Such actions as these are, walking, quiet riding, putting on and taking off one's clothes, washing one's hands, and the like. A good rule for determining what we may and what we may not do while reciting the Hours is that, while saying prayers of obligation all those actions may lawfully be performed, which may lawfully be performed while reciting prayers that are not of obligation; because, in both cases, reverence and attention are required in order to avoid sin. Hence, if anyone were to recite either the Canonical Hours, or any other prayers, while performing any of these actions, he would not sin. This is evident from the fact that the Church orders her priests to recite certain prayers while they are putting on the sacred vestments; that it was the practice of the ancient monks to join prayer with manual labour; and that spiritual writers exhort all Christians, when going about their ordinary duties, to lift up their hearts in prayer to God.

Nevertheless, the difficulty about internal attention itself still remains. This is not whether he who, without such attention, recites the Hours in a voluntarily distracted manner commits any sin, for all admit that he is guilty of a sin of irreverence, whether he is saying a prayer to which he is bound or one to which he is not bound. The question is whether one who, without internal attention recites the Canonical Hours satisfies his obligation. St. Thomas, Navarre, Soto, Cajetan, Sylvius, Lessius, Layman, Marchantius, and many others whom Bonacina enumerates and follows, maintain that he does not. According to these authors, external attention does not suffice in order to satisfy the precepts of the Hours; they require internal attention also. They support their opinion by the decree of the

Lateran Council which was held under Innocent III. After enumerating many abuses existing among the Clergy and especially that when present in Choir they did not keep silence, but that they attended to the chattering of laymen, giving an attentive ear to ill-timed discourses, and not listening to the Divine Word, it adds: 'Wherefore, under the penalty of suspension, we forbid these and the like abuses, and we strictly order the Clergy, in virtue of holy obedience, studiously and devoutly to celebrate the Office both by night and by day, as far as God shall have given them power.'

The Council of Treves in its second Canon, and that of Milan in its fourth, observe that the word *studiously* refers to the office of the lips, and the word *devoutly* to the office of the heart. Besides the proof from authority, they strengthen their conclusion by reason, which teaches us that internal attention is requisite for prayer. For, without that attention, vocal prayer neither is nor can it be called devout; for, mere external devotion is not a real, but only an apparent devotion. St. Thomas says that, between internal devotion and external devotion, there is the same relation that there is between a person moving an object and the object moved. As, therefore, an object remains motionless till someone moves it, so also does external devotion remain lifeless till internal devotion infuses into it a vivifying spirit.[1] Furthermore, it cannot be said that this internal act, requisite for the due recitation of the Hours, is the first intention itself of praying to and of worshipping God by the words to be recited. The existence of intention is impossible in one who does not even think of God. Nor can the words of the Council be taken as a mere piece of salutary advice, as is affirmed by those persons who argue that the words, 'as far as God shall have given them power,' signify all attention and devotion possible, which dispositions no sensible man would consider requisite for the fulfilment of the precept. For, the phrase, 'as far as God shall have given them power,' does not imply that

[1] St. Thomas, II., ii., q. 32, a. 1.

the Council orders them to use all possible attention whatever, but only an attention proportionate to the grace which God has given them. Others contend that nothing more than external devotion is ordered by this precept. Their opinion is based upon the preamble of the Canon, in which Clerics are blamed for clipping the words during the recitation of the Divine Office, and for talking while present at it. To avoid the first defect, it orders the Office to be said *studiously*; to avoid the second, it orders it to be said *devoutly*. But in both these orders it was external indevotion that the Council wished to eliminate. Now, while admitting that this twofold indevotion is prohibited by the words of the Canon which says: 'We prohibit these and the like abuses under penalty of suspension,' we maintain that it orders internal devotion as well, for the Canon does not cease with the words above cited; it proceeds to say; 'And, in virtue of holy obedience we strictly order them *studiously* and *devoutly* to celebrate the Office both by night and by day.' If it intended to forbid only external indevotion, which was condemned and removed by the former prohibition, what reason was there for adding these words? Moreover, in the interpretation of laws, the best rule to follow is to take, in their proper signification, the words in which the law is couched. Now the word *devotion*, in its natural signification, means an internal act, without which what appears externally can only improperly be called devotion. Again; the Council, as these men maintain, orders external devotion; but this essentially and properly, is not devotion at all, and it does not, without internal devotion, specifically constitute an act of religion. Therefore, by directly ordering external devotion, it indirectly orders that which is internal. This conclusion receives a still further confirmation from a Tridentine decree, in which it is ordained that Clerics should be compelled to recite the Divine Office, to sing in Choir, and to praise the name of the Lord in hymns and canticles, *reverently*, *distinctly*, and *devoutly*.[1] By the word

[1] De Reform., Session 24, Cap. xii.

*reverently*, modest posture of body is ordered; by *distinctly*, a right pronunciation of the words. These two things constitute what is called *external* devotion. Therefore, by the word *devoutly*, internal devotion is ordered, for if it is not, then the Council has added this word for no reason whatever. As a further proof in favour of our conclusion, we may cite the words of St. Thomas who says: 'Actual attention, in some way or other, is required for prayer, either to avoid sin in those prayers that are said by precept, or to gain merit in those that are not.' He then goes on to explain how actual attention is not required to be such as will persevere throughout the entire prayer, but only such as springs from and subsists in virtue of a preceding act; in other words, he means virtual attention; and that this attention is *internal* is evident from the tenor of the whole passage, and especially from these words: 'But a man moves virtually, when he goes to prayer with the intention of asking something or of paying a debt of service to God, even though in the course of the prayer his mind is carried away to other things. This will hold good, unless the wandering of the mind be so great that the force of the first intention perishes altogether. Hence, a man ought frequently to call his heart back unto itself.'[1]

Finally, if we examine the matter from a rational point of view, the necessity for internal attention in all prayer that is worthy of the name will at once manifest itself. We say, therefore, and even the upholders of the opposite view will admit it, that in order to satisfy the precept of reciting the Canonical Hours, a person must have an intention of praying to and of worshipping God, which intention perseveres at least virtually throughout them all, because the Church orders the Hours to be said as a prayer and as an act of religious worship. But this intention of praying to and of worshipping God, cannot coexist with voluntary distractions, and therefore internal attention is necessary for prayer. For it would be a contradiction in terms to

[1] St. Thomas, II., ii., q. 83.

say that anyone wishes to have his mind raised to God and united with Him, and at the same time separated from Him. Also, it is a contradiction to say that anyone can wish to worship God, when he does not wish even to think of Him, or rather, when he desires to offend Him, and actually does offend Him. Therefore, we repeat once again that internal attention is necessary for prayer, and the opposite opinion has been deservedly condemned as inconsistent, contrary to the Word of God, leading to hypocrisy, and finally reprobated by the prophets and by Our Lord Himself in these words: 'This people honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.'[2]

Thus far we have given the more probable opinion, which is strongly to be recommended in practice, but yet it cannot be insisted upon as the only one tenable. For there is in the contradictory sense a *probable* opinion which may without scruple be acted upon. It is held by Sylvester, Paludanus, Medina, Rosella, Angelus, Coninch, Comitolus, Diana, Tamburini, Caramuel, and a crowd of other eminent theologians, among whom is St. Alphonsus. This opinion is to the effect that *internal* attention is not so necessary for satisfying the precept of the Divine Office as that the person reciting without it would be obliged to repeat the Canonical Hours. These theologians maintain that anyone who together with *external attention* has the *intention* of praying to and of worshipping God, substantially satisfies his obligation, no matter how much he may have been distracted during the whole time. If this conclusion be borne in mind, it will save from many a worrying scruple those who have read or who have been taught only the more probable and strict view.

[2] St. Matt. xv. 8; Isaias xxix. 13.

## SECTION VII.

### CAUSES WHICH EXCUSE FROM THE RECITATION OF THE HOURS.

THEOLOGIANS usually assign three causes which exempt a person from the obligation of reciting the Canonical Hours, or from complying with any other Ecclesiastical precept whatever. These are physical impotence, moral impotence, and a legitimate dispensation. Under the head of physical impotence we may put all such cases as forgetfulness, blindness, the want of a Breviary, and the like. The fact of not having a Breviary does not, as we have already stated, excuse a person from his obligation if he is able to recite by heart a notable part of the Office. A person is considered to be labouring under moral impotence, when he cannot recite his Office without grave scandal; or without the risk of grave personal injury; or of involving others in the injury threatening himself. For, though the injury may not actually fall upon himself or upon others, yet if it is reasonably presumed that it will fall, that presumption suffices to free him from the obligation. Thus, for instance, a sick man may fear that the recitation of the Divine Office will seriously injure him. Now, although he may not be sure that the evil which he dreads will actually take place, yet he is freed from his obligation. The reason of this is that the Church not only does not wish to bind us in cases in which grave injury would befall us, but is unwilling to do so when there is even a danger of such injury. In this latter case, however, it is safer to ask the Bishop for a dispensation, and to act upon the advice of a physician, or of some prudent and conscientious man. In weighing these cases of impotence, we should always bear in mind that inconveniences which are only slight to a healthy man—such as heaviness of head, lassitude, and the like—are grave ills in the case of those who are sick. Yet we do not on this account consider that

any kind of sickness will suffice to exempt a person from the obligation of reciting the Hours. In such fevers, for example, as are called tertian or quartan, that is to say, which occur at regular intervals of three or four days, we do not think that one would be excused from his Office on the intervening days, and sometimes not even on the days themselves when the fever is upon him.

The third reason which exempts a person from reciting the Canonical Hours, is a *legitimate dispensation*. The Pope, as head and fountain of all authority in the Church, may dispense in this, as well as in other Ecclesiastical laws. It matters not whether the cause assigned for the dispensation is just or not; provided only that a *true* cause be assigned, the dispensation will hold good, it will be valid. But if the cause for which the dispensation is asked be not a just one, then the dispensation will be valid, but unlawful; that is to say, the person who obtains it will sin, and also the person who grants it. The exemption, however, which is thus obtained without a just reason, may be made use of without scruple. The reason is that the Pope being the chief representative of the authority which has imposed the law may, at his pleasure, *validly* make an exception to the law in favour of some one who has given a reason which, in his mind, entitles that person to the benefit of this privilege. But he cannot *licitly* grant a dispensation unless there is a sufficient reason; for, if he were to do so, he would be abusing his power, and would, therefore, be acting illicitly.

The Bishop, by ordinary power, cannot dispense from the Office; because the law which imposes the obligation of reciting it, is a law made by his Superior. Nevertheless, by a presumptively delegated power, conceded to him by the Pope, he may grant this dispensation, lest the Faithful in frequently occurring cases, be obliged to have recourse to the Holy See.

Regular and Conventual Prelates can dispense in the case of their subjects; because they have over them a *quasi* episcopal jurisdiction, and also because this faculty

is granted to them among their other privileges. But both Bishops and Regular Prelates must have a just cause for granting these dispensations, otherwise they are invalid; for, it cannot be supposed that the Pope would invest superiors with this power except upon this condition. Any doubtful impediment, however, may be looked upon as a just cause for dispensing. If, for instance, anyone is labouring under the tormenting burthen of grave scruples, or if any sick person has a doubt as to his ability to recite either the whole or a part of his Office, it is right for the Superior in both cases to grant a dispensation; otherwise his subjects would be forced to live in a continual state of perplexity.

It now remains for us to ask three questions upon the Divine Office, and having answered them, we will bring to a close these remarks upon the Canonical Hours. First: Is a person who foresees that he will be prevented from saying the Hours at the times fixed for them, obliged to anticipate the time within the same day? We answer that he is obliged; because his duty of reciting the Office binds him the whole day long. The times fixed for reciting the various Hours are not appointed for the purpose of ending the obligation, but only of urging its fulfilment. If this were not so, the obligation of reciting the Hours would cease as soon as the time at which they ought to be said had elapsed; just in the same way as the obligation of hearing Mass on a Sunday ceases when the day has passed.

We have been careful to insert in the question the clause *within the same day;* for, it is doubtful whether he who foresees that he will not be able to recite Matins on the morrow, is bound to anticipate, and to recite them on the preceding evening. Some authors say that he is not bound to anticipate; because a precept which obliges only on the morrow, can, by no means, bind us to-day; and also, because the power to satisfy to-day an obligation which does not come into force until the morrow, is a privilege which no one is bound to use. This opinion

is probable; but all strongly urge the opposite as being more safe in practice.

Secondly: Is one who cannot recite the Canonical Hours bound to say any other prayers instead; or to listen to another person reciting the Office; or to procure a substitute to recite it in his place? To all these questions we return a negative answer. If a person cannot recite the Office, he is not bound to say any other prayers in its stead; because the precept which binds him has reference to an Office appointed by the Church, and not to any other prayers. He is not bound to listen to another person reciting the Office; bcause the precept orders him to *recite* the Offce, and not to *listen* to the recital of it. Lastly, he is not obliged to procure a substitute if he cannot himself recite it; because the precept imposes a *personal* obligation which cannot be fulfilled by another. Nevertheless, though there is not a legal obligation in any of these cases, yet there is an obligation arising from the natural law of gratitude, in consequence of which Clergymen and Religious are bound to pray for those who have provided for them the means of subsistence; but how much, when, and how they are to pray for them, is not prescribed.

Thirdly: What is to be thought of the prayer '*Sacrosanctæ*,' which is recited after the Divine Office? To this prayer Leo X. granted by word of mouth—'*oraculo vivæ vocis*'—the following indulgence: 'If it is recited with a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria after each Hour, or after many Hours said together, he grants the remission of all the venial defects contracted through human frailty during the recital of that Hour or of those Hours,' so that a person is exempted from the burthen of repeating that which he has recited amiss. Nor does it matter that Gregory XV. and Urban VIII. revoked all favours granted by word of mouth by former Pontiffs, because they recalled only those concessions which were made 'to Superiors and to persons of any Order, Congregation, Institute, or Society whatever, or to the Orders, Congregations, Institutes, or Societies,' as the decree

states. But the concession of which we speak was not made to Regulars only, but without exception, to all who recite the Divine Office, and therefore it does not fall under the revocation made by the two Popes.

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## SECTION VIII.

### A METHOD OF DEVOUTLY RECITING THE CANONICAL HOURS.

WE are told in the Sacred Scriptures to prepare our soul before prayer, and not to be as those who tempt God; for, if without any preparation, we enter upon this holy duty we shall not quit ourselves well of it; and because of the instability of our mind, which flits, like a butterfly, from one object to another, we shall be filled with all kinds of ill-timed, misplaced thoughts, and thus, instead of appeasing the anger of God, and of moving Him to bestow His graces and His benefits upon us, we shall rouse Him to indignation against us. Therefore, before we venture to stand as suppliants in God's presence, our minds, like musical instruments, must needs be strung up to the height of spiritual things. This is done by means of a suitable preparation, which is made in a remote sort of way, by living a holy life; that is to say, by watching over our hearts, in order to keep them pure, by profitably spending our time, and by performing our actions with a right intention.

That which is called the proximate preparation for prayer consists in reflecting for a few moments beforehand upon what we are going to do. In our prayer we are going to adore God, to give Him thanks, and to ask Him to bestow His favours upon us. After a preparation of this kind, the soul is in a fit state to present itself before God. But how is it to comport itself during the recitation of the Divine Office, in order to draw profit from that sublime prayer? Some persons are in the habit of attending to the sense of the Psalms and of throwing themselves into the spirit which pervades them. If the Psalm prays, they pray; if it praises God,

they praise Him; if it admires His works, they strive to have their souls full of admiration for them. This is an excellent method, and it would be greatly facilitated, if they knew the occasion when David composed each Psalm, and the circumstances which impelled him to write. Nevertheless, as the sentiments expressed in these inspired compositions change so frequently, even during the course of the same Psalm, the mind is liable to wander off from the sense, and to follow up some train of thought, or to pursue some image suggested by the words. Therefore, another method was devised by the devout Garcias Cisneros, a Spanish Benedictine Abbot, who lived in the fifteenth century, and ruled the celebrated monastery of Montserrat. This is, to pay during the Divine Office our tribute of adoration, thanksgiving, and petition. These acts may be performed in the following manner.

I. *Adoration.*—At Matins: adore the life, Passion, and glorification of Our Lord upon earth. At Vespers: in company with our Blessed Lady, with the Church triumphant, with the Church militant, adore God.

II. *Thanksgiving.*—At Prime and at Tierce thoughout the week, this portion of our service must be paid to God. On Monday *at Prime:* thank Him for the work of your creation, wherein you may consider that He predestined you, created you and gave you a body. *At Tierce:* for having given you a soul, a Guardian Angel, and Christian parents.

On Tuesday, thank Him for His gifts of grace. *At Prime:* for having given you His grace, His Holy Spirit, His Sacraments. *At Tierce:* for having washed you in the waters of Baptism, strengthened you in Confirmation, and made you a Christian.

On Wednesday, thank Him for your vocation. *At Prime:* for having borne with you, called you to Himself, and given you a good will. *At Tierce:* for having welcomed you, called you from the world, and placed you in a good Community.

On Thursday, thank Him for your justification. *At*

*Prime:* for having changed your will, given you perseverance, and also a well-grounded hope. *At Tierce:* for having fed you with the Holy Eucharist, opened to you the Scriptures, and bequeathed to you the ornaments of all virtue.

On Friday, thank Him for all His other gifts to you whether they regard your soul or your body. *At Prime:* for having clothed you from the first with many gifts; for having added many more and for having given you the grace of meditation. *At Tierce:* for having enkindled His love in you; kept you from sin; raised you when you had fallen.

On Saturday, thank Him for His providence in this your pilgrimage. *At Prime:* for having preserved your being; saved you from many harms; supported you in all your wants. *At Tierce:* for having supplied you with many other good things; preserved other creatures for your well-being, watched over and governed you.

On Sunday, thank Him for your glorification, or for His gifts of glory. *At Prime:* these gifts are above us, beside us, within us. *At Tierce:* they are without us, beneath us, around us.

III. *The Duty of Petition.*—On each of the days throughout the week, at Sext and at None, your petition to God should be made for seven classes of men, out of reverence for the seven words spoken by Our Lord when hanging on the Cross. *At Sext:* for your enemies, for Christians, for infidels, and for Jews; for your kindred; for your benefactors. *At None:* for all in suffering, in trial, or in bondage; for those who are in mortal sin; for the just; for the sick and for the dying. *At Complin:* pray for the suffering souls in Purgatory; for the welfare of the Church; for your own Congregation.[1]

This method is somewhat complicated, and it will be, at first, a tax upon the memory; but if anyone persevere in using it, like all other difficulties, it will speedily be rendered easy by habit, and he will be able to follow it out, in all its parts, with as much ease as he now turns over the

[1] Garcias Cisneros, Direct. Horar. Canon.

leaves of his Breviary. If, however, this plan should not meet with his approbation, there is a much simpler one, which he will, perhaps, be able to follow with more profit. This is to propose to himself on each day of the week one or more of the scenes of Our Lord's Passion. These must be placed before the mind, like a picture, while the Psalms of the Office are being said, and the various sentiments of these inspired prayers be either applied to Our Lord, or considered as being addressed by Him to us. By this plan each will find that sometimes he will be prostrate in profoundest adoration before his God; at others, he will, in company with the Saints and the Angels, be praising and blessing Him; now, he will be calling to Him with the voice of petition, or of sorrow for sin; and again, he will be listening to the words of admonition, counsel, reproof, warning, encouragement, which Christ addresses to him.

Thus, for instance, at Matins, he may represent to himself Jesus seated at table in the midst of His Apostles, and telling them with what an ardent desire He has longed to eat this pasch with them. Then he will see Him kneeling before each of those poor fishermen to wash his feet; and finally taking the bread and the chalice into His all-holy hands, and by those few words of power changing them into His own most precious body and blood. With this picture before him to arrest the wandering imagination, he will be able easily and profitably to recite the Psalms of Matins.

At Lauds, he may advance to the next stage of Our Lord's Passion, and represent to himself Jesus with His Apostles, going forth into the night, crossing the brook Cedron, and entering the Garden of Olives.

During all the Little Hours, He may be represented to the mind as kneeling in prayer, sighing, weeping, and sweating blood, by reason of the mental agony of repugnance, loathing, and fear which was racking His soul with unutterable anguish. In this way a portion of the Sacred Passion may be assigned to each day; or the mysteries of

our Blessed Lady's life, or of that of her holy Spouse St. Joseph, may be made the subject of our contemplation during the recital of the Canonical Hours.

Moreover, it will help very much towards their devout and attentive recital, if upon each day of the week we have some particular object for which we offer up our duty of prayer. Thus, on Sunday, we might recite the Office in order to adore, praise, and honour the most Holy Trinity. On Monday, we might implore the aid of our Guardian Angels and of all the other Choirs of the heavenly Courts. Tuesday might be devoted to the honour of our holy Father St. Benedict, petitioning him to pray for us and to stir up in the Church that fervent spirit wherewith he served and loved God. On Wednesday, we might pray to, and ask the help and the powerful intercession of the meek and holy St. Joseph. On Thursday, we might thank and adore God for the institution of the most Holy Eucharist. On Friday, we might contemplate the most bitter Passion of Our divine Lord; and on Saturday think of, and beg God to give us grace to imitate the virtues of our dear Lady.

Some such plan as this, if carefully and perseveringly followed, will speedily habituate us to an attentive and devout celebration of the Divine Office, and the result will be a rapid advance in perfection, the acquisition of incalculable favours and blessings both for ourselves and for the Church at large, the conversion of sinners, the strengthening of the feeble and the wavering, the permanent resurrection of the fallen, and the liberation of countless souls from the penal fires of Purgatory.

Therefore, let each of us strive with all his might to perform this duty of the Religious and of the Clerical State with the greatest diligence and devotion; and in order to incite himself to this, let him bear in mind and frequently meditate upon these words of our holy Father St. Benedict: 'We believe that the Divine Presence is everywhere, and that the eyes of the Lord in all places behold both the good and the bad; but we believe this especially and without any doubt, when we assist at the Work of God.' What,

then, is the consequence which he would have us draw from this truth? It is this: 'Ever to be mindful of these words of the royal Psalmist: "Serve ye the Lord in fear. Sing ye His praises with understanding. In the sight of the Angels I will sing praise unto Thee;" and, therefore, to be reverent in that august Presence, and so to sing the Divine Office, that both mind and voice may be in accord.'[1]

[1] Regula St. Bened., Cap. xix.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *MEDITATION: ITS NECESSITY, UTILITY, AND OBLIGATION.*

WHENEVER anyone applies the faculties of his mind to reflect upon any subject, he is said to *meditate.* If this meditation is made for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, or of exercising and of improving the mental powers, it is nothing more than a study or a philosophical research. But if these mental faculties are applied to some pious subject, for the purpose of advancing the soul in virtue, and of uniting it more closely to God, this exercise rises at once from a merely intellectual process into the lofty regions of a religious act, and becomes prayer, which is called mental, to distinguish it from that in which the emotions, the affections, and the wishes of the soul find expression in words.

Meditation is the first and lowest stage of mental prayer. In the prosecution of it, all the faculties of the soul are brought into play; they lend their aid to make the heart love the Law of God, and to hate all that is opposed to His divine will. The memory, like a faithful and diligent steward, gathers together and places before the intelligence the matter that is to be submitted to its consideration. This consideration or examination is in various ways exercised by the intelligence. At first it merely apprehends that which is brought before its notice, and conceives an idea of it which may be expressed thus: 'God, good, beautiful.' In the next place, by comparing one idea with another, it forms a judgment about that which it has apprehended and then enunciates its judgment. Thus, having seen the idea expressed by the word 'God,' and the idea expressed by the word 'good,' it declares that there is an agreement between the two, and says: 'God is good.' After this, it goes farther still, and

reflecting upon the goodness of God, begins to reason with itself thus: 'Whatever is good deserves to be loved: but God is good: therefore He deserves to be loved.' By this means truth is brought before the notice of the will, which straightway either adheres to it, if it preceives it to be good, or turns away from it, if it considers it to be evil. From the intelligence and the will conjointly, there spring what are called *resolutions*, or determinations of the will to act. In order to assist these powers in representing truth to the soul, and in impressing truth upon it in the most vivid and telling manner, the imagination is brought into requisition, giving light so clear, and colour so brilliant, as to make the objects represented to the mind stand out in bold relief and appear as if endowed with life.

When the intellectual process which we have been describing is applied to the wants and the cravings of the soul, there springs from the soul, just as a flower springs from its stem, or fruit from a tree, or water from a well, the great Christian act of prayer unto God, Whom it perceives to be the source of all good. It sees that it has nothing, that it can do nothing without His aid; and falling down in all humility before Him, it pours forth in His presence the wishes, the desires, the needs of its being.

Now, the ultimate end of prayer is to unite the soul indissolubly with God. What we may call its subordinate end, or that means by which this union with God must be brought about, is the flight of evil, the practice of good. Hence, one of the chief reasons why we meditate is to make us pray; we pray, to obtain help or grace to practise what meditation has pointed out to be our duty; we practise good and shun evil, to be united with God by perfect charity in this life, that we may be eternally united with Him in the world to come. Therefore, a mere glance will suffice to show us the relation which exists between the faculties of the soul and prayer, or that end for which, in the present instance, we exercise them; the memory of various important motives and considerations prepares and furnishes matter for meditation; medita-

tion causes the affections of the soul to spring up: 'My heart grew hot within me; and in my meditation a fire shall flame out;'[1] the affections give rise to resolutions; resolutions, aided by divine grace, which has been sought for and obtained by prayer, cause the soul to practise the good which, during the course of its meditation, it has seen to be its duty to perform.

Having explained what meditation is, and the purpose for which we meditate, we may now proceed to consider its necessity, its utility, and the nature of the obligation which calls upon us to exercise ourselves in this species of mental prayer.

In estimating the necessity for meditation for one who desires to lead a Christain life and to save his soul, we must lay down as a first principle the self-evident truth that those things which fall beneath the perception of our bodily senses make a deeper and more lasting impression upon us than those which do not. They speak to us a plain, unmistakable language which appeals to our intelligence and to our heart, through eye, and ear, and sense. It needs no careful reflection, no painful process of reasoning, no groping through conjectures and doubtful possibilities, to tell us that they are good, or useful, or profitable. They are there before us. They speak for themselves. But it is not so with the things that are invisible, that fall not under sense, that speak to the intelligence only. Though their existence is as true and as certain as are the stones under our feet, as is the sun which shines in the heavens, as the scenery which meets our corporeal eye, yet by the mere fact of being invisible, of being beyond the reach of our corporeal eye, and the touch of our sensitive body, they make very little impression upon us, and verify the old adage of being out of mind by the simple fact of being out of sight.

Now, chief in importance among the things which fall not within the cognisance of the senses, are the great truths of faith: that there is a God Whom we are bound to love; that He has appointed for our guidance in His service a Law

[1] Ps. xxxviii. 4.

which we must observe and obey; that if we do this, we shall be for ever happy with God in the kingdom of His bliss; that if we do it not, we shall be lost for ever. We repeat, that these and similar truths, from the mere fact of not being sensible, that is to say, of not being before our eyes and under our hands, are therefore liable to slip altogether from our memories, or to become for us as so many shadowy unrealities. Yet it is all-important that they should not be for us mere phantoms, but that which they really are, and that which God intended them to be in our regard—hard, incontestable facts. For they are the rules of human actions, and by them, and by the inevitable consequences which flow from them, those actions are to be squared and shaped in accordance with the pattern of justice and of truth of which they are the expression. But in order to be what God intended them to be, they must be made to come forth from the shadowy land of unreality and of fable and to stand forth before our intelligences and our wills, full of life and of substance, ever present if possible, but at least within easy call, if that cannot be effected.

How can this be done? By means of meditation. For, if the memory recall the great truths which underlie our human existence, and the intelligence, contemplating them, begin to revolve them within itself, and by the aid of the imagination to paint for itself such a picture as that wondrous artist is able to produce, what were heretofore but faint outlines will stand out sharp and clear; what was flimsy and unsubstantial as is summer gossamer will grow into the solid consistency of fact; what was fabulous and ghost-like will spring into lusty life and assume so definite a shape, that it will become the guide and ruler of our actions. For, reflection will present to the will the truths of faith as living things, and the will will accept and adhere to them. It will love them for their beauty and their worth, as well as for the incalculable benefits which they bring in their train. It will resolve to cling to them, to obey their counsels, and to be guided by the wisdom which speaks through them. Finally, seeing how

weak human nature is when left to itself, how blind, how poor, how naked, how utterly impotent, it will begin to pray for that grace aided by which it will be strong as a giant to meet difficulties, to overcome them, and to run in the steep way of God's commandments.

From this we may see how necessary is mental prayer in this its first stage of meditation; for it effects all that we have stated. It brings home to the intelligence, and in a very vivid manner renders present to it, the invisible things of faith. It moves the will to act upon the suggestions which these truths engender. It urges it to pray for aid and thereby teaches it how to unlock the treasury of heaven. It causes God to enrich the soul with graces. It makes it live a Christian life, and thus merit that future state of beatitude for the gaining of which Almighty God breathed into us the breath of life.

If, then, meditation is necessary in order to make men realise the great truths and to give them a firm grasp of the science of salvation, it may be looked upon also as one of the most useful means for the acquisition of that science. Observe how men of the world apply themselves to master those branches of knowledge which advance them in their professions, and you will learn what meditation can do for the great science of sciences. If they wish to have somewhat more than a mere smattering of knowledge, and to go below the surface, to the very sources of things, they bend all the energy of their minds to the subject which they have taken in hand. They probe and search and follow up their discoveries step by step, till at last they hold in their hands all the rings of the chain which links together and makes of a piece the science which they intend to master. They reflect very much upon all that meets them in the course of their researches; they compare and find out differences; they analyse and put together, till they are able to survey as a whole and in all its parts, the matter which has been the object of their studious and careful examination. This intellectual labour, this profound meditation, gives them a thorough grasp of every subject to which they wish to apply it.

Now, that which profound and careful thought is able to effect for the acquisition of earthly science, meditation, or that same power of thought, aided by the grace of God, is able to effect for the attainment of that spiritual science which leads men to heaven. In this also, as well as in the science that is of this earth, men do not reach the topmost height, or grasp the prize by one act of the will, or with the ease wherewith an eagle swoops down upon its prey. It is a slow painful process, like that of climbing steep and precipitous mountain paths; and the limbs which we make use of are those of meditation. Nevertheless, though slow and painful it is the process best adapted for the attaining of that much-to-be-desired end. For, just consider the matter for one moment: can anyone reflect upon the goodness of God, especially with respect to himself, and upon what the God-Man, Jesus Christ, has suffered in order to redeem him, without feeling his heart fired with burning love? Then, reflecting upon his faults, his weaknesses, and his manifold transgressions, can he fail to be humbled, and to feel a profound contempt for his meanness, and his want of generosity? Can he dwell upon these thoughts without admitting that he is deserving of the most severe chastisement? Therefore, by means of meditation he arrives most easily at the knowledge of God, the contempt of himself, and the practice of Christian virtues.

Hence it is that, in the Sacred Scriptures, this duty of reflecting upon the great truths of faith is commanded by God Himself, and its advantages are extolled by the mouth of His Prophets and Apostles. After giving to them the ten great precepts of the Law, He says to each of the children of Israel: 'Thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey.'[1] Speaking to Josue, whom He appointed after the death of Moses to be the guide and ruler of His people, He bids him meditate upon the book of the Law, that he may be unto them what Moses had been: 'Let not the book of this Law depart from thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate

[1] Deut. vi. 7.

upon it day and night, that thou mayest observe and do all things that are written in it; then shalt thou direct thy way, and understand it.'[1] Also, among other wise counsels which the great Apostle gave to his disciple whom he had established in the high office of a Bishop was the exhortation to meditate upon what he had to teach unto others: 'Meditate upon these things, be wholly in these things; that thy profiting may be manifest to all.'[2] The happy fruit springing from meditation is described for us by the royal Psalmist when he says: 'Blessed is the man who shall meditate day and night upon the Law of the Lord. He shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season;'[3] and again: 'Blessed are they that search His testimonies: that seek Him with their whole heart;'[4] and a little farther on: Unless Thy Law had been my meditation, I had then perhaps perished in my abjection.'[5]

After this we need not wonder at the eulogistic terms in which the Fathers of the Church speak of the utility of meditation for advancing the soul in all Christian virtue. 'The soul,' says St. Bernard, 'is the source whence meditation flows. That act of meditation purifies the very source whence it springs. It regulates our disorderly inclinations; rightly directs our actions; corrects our excesses; rules our moral nature; makes our life upright, orderly; and gives us the knowledge both of things human and of things divine.'[6] St. Ambrose looked upon it as a most useful preparation for meeting and subduing the devils, who, by wearisome temptation, incessantly molest the Christian soul. 'Before the contest,' he says, 'let us train ourselves by the assiduous practice of meditation.'[7] St. Augustine gives us an excellent motive for being very earnest about meditation, when he says: 'It is impossible to commit evil when we have only good thoughts, which spring up in the mind after meditation, and fill it with their bloom and with their sweet odour, as if they were so many brilliant and fragrant flowers.'[8]

[1] Josue i. 8. [2] 1 Tim. iv. 15. [3] Ps. i. 2, 3. [4] Ps. cxviii. 2, 92. [5] *Ibid.*
[6] St. Ber. De Consider., Lib. i., c. 7. [7] In Ps. cxviii. 29. [8] St. Aug. in Ps. cxviii.

From all this we may conclude that, meditation upon the great truths of our faith and upon the Law of God, is necessary for all who desire to live as men ought to live, whose last end is the enjoyment of God in the bliss of His heavenly kingdom. If, then, it is necessary for this purpose, let us endeavour clearly to understand whether there is any precept which obliges us at stated times to give ourselves up to it. There can be no doubt whatever that there is a precept which binds men to pray. The question is, whether there exists any precept obliging them to pray in the way described—that is to say, after a foregoing mental process which we call meditation. This is a controverted point, and much argument has been expended on both sides, some writers maintaining that there is such a precept, and, therefore, that meditation is necessary, and others contending that no such precept exists, and, therefore, that it is not necessary. Of one thing, however, we may be perfectly certain, and that is, that meditation, or, if you please, mental prayer, is not so necessary, that without it salvation would be impossible. For, when Our Lord was asked what is necessary to gain everlasting life, He answered: 'If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments.' To contend that salvation is impossible unless a certain time is set apart each day for the practice of meditation, is considered by Suarez to be rash, and to savour of the doctrine of the *Illuminati*, one of whose errors was that there is a divine precept ordering mental prayer, and that its obligation is so strict that nothing can be done without it. As for any general and rigorous precept ordering mental prayer, none such exists. The divine and the natural precept of prayer of some kind or other is satisfied as well by vocal prayer as by meditation, except in cases in which mental prayer is imposed by the Rule, or by the Statutes of a Religious Order.

Nevertheless, although there is no absolute or general necessity for mental prayer, yet it may, in certain circumstances, become necessary, as in the case of Religious who aspire to perfection. These, in the opinion of St. Thomas,

would be like unarmed soldiers upon a battle-field, if they did not exercise themselves in this salutary duty of their State. According to St. Bonaventure, they would, in the sight of God, be wretched, good-for-nothing beings, carrying about a dead soul in a living body. If this be true of Religious, it will hold good in the case of Ecclesiastics also. How can they, without the aid of meditation, lead a chaste and heavenly life? How can they either devoutly recite the Divine Office, or offer, with all the respect which is due to it, the adorable Sacrifice of the Altar? If they do not imbibe in prayer the spirit of Jesus Christ, how can they feed His sheep? How can they lead and guide either those who are tending to perfection, or those who are actually perfect?

From what has been said, we may conclude that the obligation of mental prayer falls only upon those who, like Religious, are specially bound to it, inasmuch as it is one of the duties of their State. Laymen, and especially the rude and the ignorant, in no way come under this obligation. For them vocal prayer will suffice, provided that it be *prayer*, and not merely a lip-service, in which the mind and the heart have no place. Nevertheless, for them also, mental prayer, though not obligatory, would prove a most excellent and useful means for advancing in perfection. It is absurd to say that they are incapable of making it. The meanest intellect is able to reflect upon its own interests; is able to devise ways and means to gain a livelihood; and therefore is quite capable of understanding its eternal interests, of reflecting upon them, and of asking God for grace to accomplish the good which it sees to be so necessary for securing those interests, and for gaining its last end. What else is this but mental prayer? It is not incapacity, it is want of goodwill that makes men shrink from the trouble of reflecting. Also, we might add with Gerson: 'They will not exercise themselves in meditation, or in mental prayer, because they dare not face their own hearts, and speak with them in solitude and alone.'[1]

[1] *Vide* Schram. Theolog. Ascetic., Tom. 1, Cap. 2, § xxxviii.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *MATTER FOR MEDITATION.*

A FEW words upon the material out of which the best subjects for meditation may be fashioned, will not be out of place here, especially as we shall have to speak a little later on upon the method in which the faculties of the mind must be employed in working it, so as to make it most valuable for the purchase of spiritual sustenance for the soul. It is, therefore, only logical first to point out the mines in which the richest veins of thought are to be found, that neither time nor energy may be wasted in labouring where there is either no precious metal, or only such as would be unsuitable for the purpose of those who are intent upon the work of their salvation. That of which anyone thus laudably engaged stands most in need, is some material out of which there may be made a powerful lever, which will raise up his mind and heart to seek out and to pursue the end for which God created him. This will be found in those two mines of spiritual thought—the fear of God and the love of God, the riches of which are most precious, most inexhaustible, and best adapted to the needs of all men without exception, whether they abound with spiritual wealth, or are pining away in the most abject misery of spiritual destitution.

First, there is the fear of God. What materials may we not dig out of that vein, so rich in thoughts which rouse the torpid soul from its lethargic sleep, and kindle once again upon the altar of the heart the fire of divine love, a fire which had, perhaps, gone almost quite out! God is our Master, our Creator, our last end. He is Almighty; we cannot escape from the glance of His all-seeing eyes, or from the grasp of His far-reaching hands. We are His, and we must go to Him. We shall die. Our eyes shall look into His.

Our ears shall hear His voice. For whatever we have done, we are answerable to Him. He will judge us. If we have done well, He will reward; if ill, He will punish; and the punishment is banishment from His sight for all eternity in the flaming prisons of hell. Each of these thoughts is in itself quite sufficient to fill the heart of him who shall take the trouble to penetrate into it, with a salutary fear of that Almighty Being from Whose power he cannot escape. Who can seriously think upon these thoughts and still go on in his sins? Who can reflect upon them, and not shudder with genuine terror, lest the word be spoken, and the thread of life be severed, and he be summoned into that dread presence to hear those fearful words: 'Go, thou accursed into everlasting fire!' To escape a doom so horrible he will strain every nerve and will employ every means which may avert it. He will see that only sin can bring him into enmity with God and separate him for all eternity from God's fatherly embrace. Therefore, he will hate and detest it. He will avoid whatever might lead him into its meshes, and he will curb and sternly bring to heel, by the lash of mortification, those passions which crave for the food of sin. Thus, *fear* will furnish him with a motive powerful enough to rouse his soul from its torpor, and to make it active in that one work which alone is necessary.

But this is only half the work. It is, we may say, only the foundation of it; and, therefore, such materials for the soul's consideration, as are to be found in the fear of God, will be suitable only for those who are beginning, or for those who are growing torpid, or who are actually asleep over their work, and who are allowing to slip away the precious hours of daylight during which they may work, and the dark night to creep on, during which no man can labour at his salvation. There is, then, in the perfection of God, another mine of thought, which will furnish material wherewith to complete the work of those who have already laid the foundation of their spiritual edifice. Contemplating Him as He is in Himself, and viewing Him as He is

seen in the light which the Church's dogmatic teaching, drawn from revelation and the Holy Scripture, throws upon Him, they see how good, how merciful, how loving He is; how like a father in His dealings with us, full of loving kindness and of merciful compassion. They see that attribute of goodness most especially manifested in His treatment of themselves individually. He created, redeemed, and regenerated them; He feeds them with His own body, blood, and divinity; He watches over them like a mother, delivers them from numberless dangers both of soul and of body, and for this purpose deputes one of His holy Angels to guard and to guide them in all their ways.

Then they cannot fail, by way of contrast, to look from Him to themselves, and before their mental eye there is unfolded the long list of their grievous transgressions, from early youth upwards to manhood—it may be, even unto old age. They see their weakness of will, their infirmity of purpose, ever resolving and never doing; and while the thought of God's goodness fills them with love, and His innumerable attributes call forth their adoring awe, their own shortcomings and sins cover them with confusion and infuse into their hearts sentiments of humility and of contrition, which Almighty God never despises. These thoughts furnish them with subjects for reflection and make them break forth into fervent acts of love, adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and deep sorrow for past offences.

Hence, we see that subjects most proper for meditation may be divided into two classes: those which spring from the fear of God, and those which spring from the consideration of His goodness; for, they furnish most powerful motives or levers for moving the will to avoid evil and to do good. Out of the vast number of subjects which may be found under these heads, each must select those best adapted to his spiritual needs and to the temper of his mind. For, it is but natural to expect that not all these will prove equally profitable to all men alike. Some are more easily moved to love God by the consideration of His severity, than by the contemplation of His goodness and of

His love. Therefore, with the advice of a prudent guide, or with that knowledge which experience imparts, let each select what will do him most good and best serve to fan his love of God into a brighter flame. In this respect as well as in the selection of subjects for poetical composition, no better counsel can be given than that of the old heathen poet:

> 'Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, æquam
> Viribus, et versate diu, quid ferre recusent,
> Quid valeant humeri.' [1]
>
> Horace, De Arte Poet. 38.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *VARIOUS PARTS OF MEDITATION.*

WHEN anyone has selected for his meditation a subject which is not beyond his strength, which is not unadapted to the temper of his mind and to the necessities of his soul, the next step to be taken is to apply his intellectual faculties to the consideration of it, in order to move his will to embrace good, and to turn away with abhorrence from evil. This consideration of the subject for meditation contains several parts, upon each of which we will offer a few observations, that will serve to make us better understand the method by which the mind and the heart are so materially aided in their pursuit of virtue and of God. The first of these parts is called the *preparation* for meditation, the necessity for which is self-evident. For, if a musical instrument which is to be used in a concerted piece must be strung up or tuned to the proper pitch, in order to be in harmony with the voices and the other instruments, so also must the mind and the heart of him who desires to meditate upon the Law of God and to pray to Him, be in accord with that all-holy Being before Whom he wishes to present himself either as a broken-hearted prodigal or as a faithful and loving son. For this end everyone who desires to meditate, must prepare for what he is about to do.

This preparation is of two kinds; the one general, consisting in certain dispositions of mind and of heart, which dispositions presuppose the removal of all obstacles to prayer, and this is called the *remote* preparation; the other *particular*, consisting in certain acts which are made immediately before meditation, and this is called the *proximate* preparation. We remotely prepare ourselves for

meditation when we free our souls from all stains of mortal sin, by heartfelt contrition, by humble confession, and by a life unsullied by any grievous transgression against the Law of God. Also, when we ward off from our mind those distracting thoughts, those corroding cares, those burthensome anxieties, which keep the souls of worldlings in as perpetual a state of unrest, as is that into which the storm-tossed sea is lashed by the fury of conflicting winds.

It is to be presumed, as a matter of course, that no one will go to the trouble and the self-denial requisite for the making of a good meditation for any other purpose than to please God, to purify the soul from sins and defects and thereby to unite it more closely with Him. When, therefore, anyone has acquired that purity of heart, that tranquillity of mind and that upright intention, about which we have just spoken, he has made the remote preparation which should necessarily precede meditation. If to this he be careful to join the practice of daily or of frequent spiritual reading, he will not only have strung up the faculties of his soul to a pitch that will put them in unison with the mind of God, but, he will have furnished the store-houses of the memory with many a theme whereon to discourse sweet music in the ears of God.

It was, doubtless, to insinuate the advantage of reading such as this that the voice which in vision spoke to St. John, bade him take the book from the hand of the Angel and eat it up;[1] for, reading is to the soul what meat and drink are to the body. Hence, also, the Apostle, among other salutary counsels given to his disciple for the maintenance of his own personal sanctity, and for the edification of the flock intrusted to him, bade him 'attend to reading.'[2] Any kind of sound Christian doctrine will suffice for this purpose; but chief in excellence and utility among all other books is the Sacred Volume of God's Holy Word. 'The Holy Scripture,' says St. Augustine, 'is a mirror in which a man may see what he ought to be, and what is the mark at which he ought to aim. The constant

[1] Apocal. x. 9. [2] Tim. iv. 13.

reading of it purifies the heart, inspires us with a fear of hell, and gives us a foretaste of the joys of Paradise. He who desires to be always with God must frequently pray and read; when we pray, we speak to God; when we read, God speaks to us. Reading tends to the spiritual advancement of the soul; for, just as the body is nourished by material bread, so also is the interior man nourished and enabled to live by the Divine Word.'[1] In order, however, that this reading should be useful, it ought to be made every day at a fixed time; it ought to be taken from some book proportioned to the reader's ability, and adapted to his special needs, and be preceded and followed by prayer. Made under these conditions, spiritual reading will fill the mind with holy thoughts upon which the soul will feed in meditation; it will help it to uproot all vices, and to plant every species of virtue in their stead.

Taking it for granted, then, that this remote preparation has gone before meditation, let us now see how we ought to conduct ourselves when actually about to engage in this holy exercise; or, in other words let us examine into what is called the proximate preparation. The first thing to be done is to retire to some quiet spot, far removed from everything that may either distract our thoughts or turn them away from God. There, kneeling humbly before Our Lord, the soul, by an act of the liveliest faith, must feelingly convince itself that He is really present; that in Him it is plunged as into the fathomless depths of some vast ocean; that it is held up, and surrounded, and penetrated by His Divinity, as the fishes which swim the paths of the sea are compassed round on all sides by its covering waters. This thrilling thought will cause the soul at once to cast itself down in lowliest adoration before that unfathomable abyss of all perfection. Peering into this, with eyes of reverential fear, it will acknowledge its unworthiness to appear in the presence of that awful majesty; and, remembering its own hardihood in daring insolently to rise up in rebellion against the great

[1] Serm. de Temp. cxii.

Almighty God, and filled with a deep sense of its own temerity, it will grieve over its sins and humbly crave pardon for them. Then it will offer itself to the Divinity to love and to serve it for ever. It will beg for light to see into the truths upon which it is about to meditate; and turning to the loving Mother of the Redeemer, to its Angel Guardian and to its patron Saints, it will implore them to pray that God may bless its efforts, and make them fruitful in good works.

When this preparatory prayer is ended, the imagination is called into play to paint before the mind a picture of the mystery or of the incident in Our Lord's life upon which the thoughts are about to be engaged. This serves as a point to which the wandering mind may easily be recalled when it strays from the subject and occupies itself with irrelevant trifles. After this comes what is called the *body* of the prayer. In this all the faculties of the soul are exercised. The memory calls forth and places before the intelligence the matter which has been selected as the subject of meditation. The intelligence then examines it in all its parts; it forms judgments about it, and from these judgments links together a chain of reasoning which holds the truth steadily before the soul.

This intellectual process may be employed for various purposes, according to the nature of the subjects upon which the mind is exercising its faculties. Sometimes it is simply to lift the affections of the heart to God; at others it is to convince the mind of some truth about which it has entertained doubts, or which, through familiarity, has lost much of its force; now, it is to impress upon the mind the necessity for, or the utility of some duty, and again it is to move the will to accept and to carry out to its legitimate conclusion, in act, that which the intelligence has clearly pointed out to be an unmistakable truth.

The intelligence having thus brought either what is good and true, or what is false and evil before the will, that power at once goes forth to and embraces the good, and turns away with abhorrence from the evil. It is true that,

for the most part, men blinded by their unruly passions cling to and love what is in reality the greatest of evils; nevertheless, this does not falsify what we have stated; for they take evil unto their hearts only because it wears for them the appearance of good. From what is evil, though it is so in appearance only, they shrink and turn away with instinctive loathing, because it is in the nature of man to pursue and to cleave to good; good is his last end, and he is no more able to hinder himself from seeking and pursuing it under some shape or other than the needle is able to avoid turning towards the pole. Hence, as soon as the will is cognisant of the good placed before it, it pours forth all its affections upon it. These affections are our nature's good impulses, which carry us to God, and animate us with the desire to embrace what will please Him, and to avoid whatever will displease Him. It is of these that the royal Prophet speaks when he says: 'In my meditation a fire shall flame out.'[1] The heart grows hot within us while we think of the goodness of God and of His manifold relations with us; then the soul, like an instrument under the hands of a musician, gives forth that melody which varies according as the different keys are touched. It loves and embraces the infinite Good; it is amazed, it wonders at His fatherly condescension; it pours itself forth in acts of thanksgiving for His bounty; it is filled with compassion when it reflects how vilely He has been used by those who have met with nothing from Him but a boundless generosity of love; consequently, it resolves to detach itself from whatever may step in to claim a share in its love; it is filled with a horror of sin which has so often rudely repulsed and trampled upon the best of friends, the most loving of fathers; it grieves for the evil which it has done, and uttering the strong cry of its heart, it calls upon God to give it grace to be faithful for the future, and humbly begs the intercession of her who was without spot or stain in the sight of God, and upon those glorious champions of the Lord who, in this life, fought His battles with heroic

[1] Ps. xxxviii. 4.

generosity, and who now reign with Him in the kingdom of His glory.

These, or some of these, will either spontaneously well up from the heart during the course of meditation, or if they do not, the will, by formulating some such acts, must, by its own power, produce them. We must not set great store upon those sensible emotions of piety which are called spiritual sweetnesses. These amorous affections are but the accidental accompaniments of piety, and they no more enter into its nature than the condiments which we use at table constitute an essential part of our meat. If these emotions come, as it were, of their own accord, or if they are vouchsafed to us by the goodness of God, we must make use of them to aid us to advance in virtue. If they are not granted to us, we must be content with the love and the piety which spring from our intelligence and our will. This is our rational service; with it God will be content; and by it our souls will be kept firmly fixed in the service of Our good Lord.

The result of the combined action of the intelligence and the will during the course of meditation, is a determination or resolution to do something pleasing to God, and to avoid anything that may cause Him displeasure. It is in this that the practical result or effect of our prayer is to be found, and by it our reflections and our prayer to God are made to tell upon our life, and thus to become fruitful in good works. Of course, there is nothing easier than to make a resolution when the heart is on fire with burning thoughts which are like so much ignited fuel in a furnace. The difficulty, however, is to carry that resolution into effect; and the reason why, in the case of but too many persons, this resolution remains inefficacious, is because it is wanting in certain qualities, without which it is impossible for it to exercise any bracing power upon the will.

In the first place it is, perhaps, only a general sort of determination which embraces a field of action too wide to be able to touch anything in particular. Thus you will find that a man whose soul is literally bristling with sins

of selfishness and of pride, will make a resolution at the end of his prayer to avoid *all* sin, and to do what he knows to be the will of God. What good effect can such a resolution have upon his conduct during the rest of that day? It is of as little use to him as a homeopathic globule would be to a man who has broken his arm. The right remedy is not applied to the malady. Therefore, a resolution must be more than general; it must be *particular*. It must deal with those ills which chiefly call for reform. Hence the selfish man must resolve to keep a watch over the motions of his heart, and to check that excessive love of his own ease and convenience, which love makes him forget that he has neighbours whose interests must be consulted as well as his own. He must say to himself: 'I know that I am proud and vain, that I am sharp-tempered and disagreeable; but my chief fault, my besetting sin, is self-seeking in all that I do. That is the root of all my ills; therefore I resolve to pluck it up.' This is what is called a *particular* resolution; because it is applied to healing the source of the evil. It is, therefore, an excellent thing to make such resolutions as these.

But the best resolution, the one which we should each endeavour to make, is that which is called '*a very particular one.*' If the man of whom we have been speaking, after examining his conduct and making a firm resolve to uproot his selfishness, were next to say: 'and in order more thoroughly to work this reform, I am determined this day to check this defect by not seeking the best meats at table, but I will content myself with those which are first portioned out for me,' he would make a most excellent resolution. For, he not only puts his finger upon something definite, but determinately specifies what portion of the evil is to be plucked up. From such resolutions as these we may hope for great progress in virtue; because any evil thus attacked cannot fail in due time to disappear.

However, if in spite of our special and of our most particular resolutions, we find that we do not keep them, we must not on that account be discouraged, nor must we

leave off making any at all. Such a proceeding would be like ceasing to eat because we do not grow stout and strong. We must go on making these resolutions, and we shall soon begin to be ashamed of our infidelity in not keeping them. One of the chief reasons why so many fail to make their resolutions of any practical use, is because when once made, they are not again thought of. How is a man to carry into effect any plan of which he no longer remembers a single detail? Therefore, what should be done, is to call to mind at some stated time during the day the resolution made in the morning. For those who live in community, and who have the privilege of being near and of visiting the Blessed Sacrament, no better occasion for recalling the morning resolution can be chosen than is that when they kneel before Our Lord in the mystery of His love, to adore, to thank, and to praise Him for His infinite mercies. Let them then bring it before the mind, and it will be as a spur to the will to carry the resolution into effect.

Thus far we have considered the beginning and the middle of meditation; to be perfect, it must have an end or conclusion. This consists of three acts—thanksgiving, offering, and petition. At the end of the meditation, when our mind is filled with holy thoughts, and our heart is on fire with pious affections, it is but natural that the soul should pour itself out in thanksgiving to God for the mercies and the graces bestowed upon it. First among these, as being most recent, is the privilege of having been admitted, for so long a time, to speak to God and to listen to His loving, fatherly voice speaking to our souls and inviting them to taste still more of His sweetness, and to test by actual experiment how light and easy is the yoke which He imposes upon our necks. This, in itself, is no slight favour, but during the course of that interview which the soul has been privileged to have, what graces has He not poured into it? He has given it light more clearly to see its duty; He has pointed out defects which must be amended; He has given courage to meet the daily recur-

ring troubles of our life here below; He has bestowed fortitude to bear up against them, and an overflowing grace to aid the soul in the performance of duties which otherwise it would be unable to accomplish, or at least which it would accomplish without any merit for eternal life. For all this, and for much more which each soul will be able to call to mind, Our good God must be thanked from the inmost recesses of a grateful heart.

Moreover, we must pour forth our grateful acknowledgment for the other benefits, general as well as particular, which, during the course of our life, He has never ceased to shower upon us. Hence, after glancing for a moment at these, beginning with our creation, redemption, regeneration, and the gift of the true faith, and then passing on to those particular and special graces, the knowledge of which is hidden in the bosom of each of us, we should call upon the Angels and the Saints to help us in our act of gratitude. We should wish for the heart of the Immaculate Mother, and for the heart of Jesus Himself, worthily to offer up the sacrifice of our thankoffering. Gratitude such as this is always very pleasing to God. Moreover, it becomes for him who is careful to pay this debt, a fruitful investment, which God repays with interest a thousandfold, both in this world and in the world to come.

Besides thanking God for His mercies and favours, the soul must also, at the end of its meditation, make an offering to Him. We have nothing to offer that is not already His; but like a good father who is pleased to see his children making him a present purchased by money which he himself has given, God also condescends to accept our gifts, even though what we offer has been bestowed upon us by His infinite bounty. Therefore, we must be careful to offer all that we have. We should offer to Him the thoughts which may pass through our minds during the course of that day; the affections which may spring up in our hearts; the resolutions which we have made; our desires, our body and soul, together with all their faculties

and powers. Lastly, before leaving the presence of that rich and bountiful Lord with Whom our soul has been communing, we should make a petition for some favour or for some grace of which we feel ourselves to be in need. Of ourselves we have nothing; we are able to do nothing —no, not so much as to think a good thought, or to say a word that is meritorious in the sight of God! We who are so indigent, stand before God, the treasury of all good; therefore, as the poor man who is hungry, athirst and well-nigh naked, is urged to stretch forth his trembling hand, and to lift up his feeble voice to ask for food and clothing, so should we also be earnest in our petition before we go from the presence of God to our ordinary occupation. But for what should we ask? First of all, for that of which we stand most in need. A hungry man, fainting through want of food, does not petition the powerful for place or for honour, but for bread. So also should it be with us. The most pressing need must be satisfied first. Each will best know his own necessities; and for their relief let him pray with the energy and the vehemence of one who is thoroughly in earnest, and who feels the importance of obtaining that which he desires.

After this, each should remember the purpose for which God has breathed into him the breath of life. It is to merit for himself the possession of God. But how is that glorious end to be achieved? It is by acquiring that perfection of which that end is the reward. Therefore, we should never conclude our meditation without humbly asking God to wash us yet more and more from our iniquities, and to cleanse us from our sins; to fill us with a boundless love of Him and of our neighbour; to give us that courage and that perseverance which will aid us to purify our hearts from even the slightest stains and defects; to give us that profound humility by which, acknowledging that we are nothing and that God is everything, we may deserve to obtain that of which we stand in need. After making these petitions to God, we should beg that throughout the day the virtue of His blessing may be

upon us, and having made choice of some short ejaculation which will summarise the meditation of the morning, we may rise from our knees, and go about our ordinary occupations, with the firm conviction that God is in our hearts, and that His grace will aid us profitably to spend our time, and to make our actions meritorious of an eternal reward.

## *EXAMPLE OF MEDITATION.*

### THE FOREGOING PRECEPTS EXEMPLIFIED.

As example is always better and more easily understood than any amount of precept and direction, it will, perhaps, be of service to the reader if we here make a meditation upon the plan traced out in the preceding pages. Let us, then, suppose that we have chosen as the subject of our meditation, 'The sanctification of our ordinary actions,' and having previously prepared the matter with great care, have knelt down in our chamber or in the church, for the purpose of making our meditation. We begin thus:

#### THE PREPARATORY PRAYER.

*Act of Faith.*—O my God, I most firmly believe that Thou art here present before me! Under these sacramental veils, Thou, my God, dost lie concealed! Thou seest me, and knowest all the desires of my heart.

*Act of Adoration.*—I adore Thee, my good Father, my Saviour, my Lord, from the abyss of my nothingness!

*Act of Sorrow.*—I grieve and I am sorry from the very bottom of my heart, for all the offences, negligences, and sins of which I have been guilty.

*Act of Humility.*—If Thou hadst not, in Thy mercy, spared me, I should now be burning in hell on account of these my manifold transgressions. Oh pardon me, and wash me yet more and more from my iniquity!

*Act of Offering.*—I offer my memory to Thee, O God the Father, that it may call to mind Thy mercy and Thy

goodness; my understanding to Thee, O God the Son, that it may ponder upon Thy infinite love; my will to Thee, O Holy Ghost, that it may be firm and strong in adhering to the Law of God.

*Petition for Light.*—O good Father, give me light and grace to draw fruit from this meditation. My dearest Mother Mary, my good Angel Guardian, my holy patron Saint, unite your prayers with mine, that I may draw fruit from my meditation.

After this prayer, the next step to be taken is to form some picture, upon which the imagination may rest, and to which it may return when, by reason of our natural instability, the mind is drawn away to other things during the course of our mental exercise. In connection, therefore, with the subject which we have chosen for our meditation, we may select these words: 'He hath done all things well,'[1] to which words the crowd gave utterance when they had witnessed one of Our Lord's most wonderful miracles; and the picture which we will form for ourselves, will be that of Our Lord surrounded by a vast multitude of people, who are looking with curiosity and pity upon the poor wretched being, whom some charitable persons had brought to Him—deaf, dumb, and as some say, blind. We must represent Our Lord, putting His all-holy fingers into this man's ears, touching his tongue, and loosing him instantly from the terrible evils which had oppressed him from his birth. Then, taking the words, 'He hath done all things well,' as our theme, we must employ upon them the faculties of our mind, and strive to elicit from our soul a determination to imitate Him as far as possible, by doing all our actions well, thus sanctifying them and making them profitable unto eternal life. For this purpose, after recalling the matter to mind by our memory, we must employ our intelligence to reason upon it thus:

I. *Point.*[2]—'If I wish to obtain holiness, without which

[1] St. Mark vii. 37.

[2] The points of this meditation are taken from Arvisinet's Memoriale Vitæ Sacerdotalis, Cap. XI. iii.

it is impossible to see God, my chief aim must be to perform all my actions holily and with great care. What is my life but a series of daily recurring actions? Therefore, if these actions be performed with due perfection, my whole life will be holy and perfect. If I rightly perform each of them, I shall be eliciting so many acts of virtue and meriting so many degrees of glory. If I go through them in a negligent, slip-shod fashion, I shall be losing my time, and innumerable degrees of glory, and that, too, without the possibility of repairing my loss. For death is coming on apace, and when he summons me hence, I shall exult and rejoice if I have done all things well; but I shall be wretched and in despair if I have done all things ill.'

After reflecting for a few moments upon these considerations, we must from our hearts begin to speak unto God and say: 'O my sweet Jesus, my loving, compassionate Father, give me that holiness without which it is impossible for me to look upon the face of my God! How terrible would it be to be banished from the light of Thy amiable countenance! Thou didst suffer it to be buffeted and to be spit upon for my sake; therefore, do not turn it away from me. Show Thy face to me. Let the light of Thy countenance shine upon me. Teach me, O good God! what I must do to obtain that holiness without which I shall never see Thee. Thou dost tell me that, if my daily ordinary actions be done well, that is to say carefully, exactly, and with the intention of pleasing Thee, they will be perfect, they will procure for me that sanctity or holiness which will clothe me in the wedding garment entitling me to sit in Thy presence, to share in Thy nuptial feast, and to gaze upon Thy beauty for ever.

My God, I will do this. All my actions shall henceforth be performed for Thy sake. I will not seek for the commendation of men; I will not seek, by my actions, to attract their notice. For me, it will be sufficient to know that Thou dost see them and dost smile approval upon them. Therefore, because I shall henceforth do all things for Thy sake, I will take care to perform them as a servant performs

his task when the eye of his master is upon him. I will perform them in Thy sight. I will perform them with the greatest exactitude. In them, I will not seek my own satisfaction but Thy good pleasure. O my soul, bestir thyself! be not sluggish! Behold death cometh onward with swift and steady stride. The daylight is fast fading away; the dark night is approaching; and thy work is not yet done—is not yet well begun. Therefore, work well, work earnestly for thy God, and let thy works be full before Him."

When these or the like affections have been elicited, we may next proceed to dwell upon some further considerations which will furnish us with other affections, and make the soul lift itself up to God. If, from the first thoughts that have been suggested, it is able to go on producing these acts, it is advisable to do so, and not to break off the impulse received from the Holy Spirit, but to persevere in it, and to continue our communing with God till the flagging of the heart's affection gives warning that more fuel must be supplied by meditation, and placed upon the altar, lest the fire sink low, and its heat decrease, and it become at last quite extinct.

II. *Point.*—'Observe in the second place, with what feverish anxiety the miser and the avaricious take care to lose nothing, how small or how worthless soever it may be. Those who are intent upon gain, eagerly lay hold of and employ every moment of time, lest it should slip away without bringing them any advantage. Those who have hoarded up their wealth, suffer nothing to be wasted, but begrudge themselves even the necessaries of life. Mark well these men who are so full of worldly wisdom, and from their conduct learn the true wisdom of the sons of God. Learn to perform the slightest, the most insignificant, the apparently most worthless action of your life in such a way that it will not be lost. Learn so to spend every moment of time that it will bring forth fruit unto eternal life. Observe how the miser does not say: "This is of little worth, and therefore it is to be despised.' On the contrary, no matter how worthless and contemptible it may seem to be, he uses

it, and turns it to good account. Therefore, do not you say: "This act is a mere nothing; it matters not how it is performed." Say rather: "This *seems*, indeed, to be of little moment; nevertheless, let the small grain of mustard-seed be sown in my field; it will grow and become a tree, and I shall yet eat of its fruit." The man who is intent upon gain says not: "These few minutes are a mere nothing; I will rest a little, and take mine ease." No, on the contrary he says: "Minutes make up hours, and hours days, and days weeks, and months, and years. Therefore, labour earnestly; after an hour the gain will come." Therefore, strive to make the smallest particle of the time of your life advantageous to you, by filling it up with some action well and holily performed. Things in themselves slight and insignificant are made precious by love. A good intention makes the most worthless action very precious; therefore, do good. Great actions without love are empty and worthless. Small things done perfectly are most acceptable to God.'

My dearest Lord! my soul is now fully convinced of these truths. I blush for very shame that I have hitherto been less wise in that which so nearly concerns my salvation than the children of this world are in that which regards their own personal interests. They are eager and careful to waste nothing, and I have foolishly squandered my most precious time by not carefully hoarding it, and by not filling it with actions performed for Thee. Alas! I have suffered them to slip from my hands, and to pass into the eternal years, unstamped with Thy sign and superscription, which would have made them for ever profitable to me. I am most heartily sorry, dearest Jesus, for my negligence, and I am determined to correct it in the future. I will never look upon anything which I do for Thee as slight, or insignificant, or worthless. I see now that every moment of my life should be spent in Thy service, and that every moment is then spent well, only when it is employed to honour and to serve Thee. I will bear this in mind, and henceforth the smallest act shall be turned to good account by being

performed for Thee. I will never again say: 'This action is of little moment, and therefore I care not how I perform it.' No, my Jesus, I will bear in mind that the most insignificant of my actions, if done for Thee, will be as wonderful in its fruitfulness as was the grain of mustard-seed which grew into a tree, in the branches of which the birds of the air found shelter. Small as these actions are, they will coalesce, and their sum total will be very great and merit Thy commendation and Thy eternal reward. Therefore, I will let nothing slip through my hands. All my actions, without exception, whether great, or small, whether important or unimportant, shall be done for Thy sake, and because I love Thee. That intention will turn what is mere dross into refined gold; what is as valueless as are the pebbles under my feet, into pearls and jewels of priceless value. Courage then, O my Soul! Have confidence; be careful of small things; do them with great love for thy dearest Father, and His approbation will make them worthy of an everlasting crown in heaven.

III. *Point.*—'Lastly, bear in mind how on the great accounting day God will reward His servants. When the sun of time shall have set and the day of life's work shall be over and the darkness is beginning to cover all things, then the Great Householder will come to render unto everyone *according to his work*. Therefore, if that work is to receive any recompense, it must be good, and consequently it must have been done with a right intention. If it can be presented before the Lord, graced with these qualities, it will receive His commendation, and it will be crowned with His rewards. But independently of this reason, what other is there that ought to urge thee to do all thy actions well? There is this one, which will not be without great weight with all who either boast of or pride themselves upon being practical men. We must of necessity go through our ordinary actions. Whether we perform them well or ill, we nevertheless have to perform them day by day.

'The priest prays, studies, recites his Breviary, offers

Sacrifice, administers the Sacraments; the student applies himself to his books, frequents the schools, holds disputations, goes to his recreation, his meals, his repose; the physician is busily employed all day long in visiting his patients, in listening to the account of their ailments and in prescribing remedies for them; the lawyer is engaged in consulting his books, in listening to his clients, in drawing up their cases and in giving them advice as to how they may most easily extricate themselves from the expensive entanglements of the Law. If each of these performs badly and negligently duties such as these, which are the necessary actions of his everyday life, or if, while executing them with all the zeal and the industry in his power he nevertheless quits himself of them without any intention of pleasing God, he acquires no merit whatever for them, but rather incurs the guilt of a slothful, or of a negligent servant, or of one who squanders his Master's substance, or who does not employ it for the profit of Him for Whom he is bound to labour.

'Therefore, although he labours and wearies himself, yet either no fruit comes of his labour, or only that which perishes with time. Such conduct is marked by anything but that good, sound, practical common-sense of which we boast so much. It is bad enough to have to labour; but to labour without reaping any advantage is worse still; to labour, and to labour without profit, and to be punished eternally for our labour, is worst of all else. Hence, a wise man will resolve to do in a right way, and with a right intention, that which he has to do. His labour will be no heavier because it is done for God, than if it were done for the world, or for no intention whatever, unless that it has to be done. It will become easier and sweeter and certainly more advantageous. Therefore, rouse thyself, O my soul! when thou findest thyself growing sluggish and negligent, and say to thyself: 'Which of these two things dost thou prefer to do—to bear a heavy yoke without profit to thyself, or to carry one which, besides being light and sweet, will procure for thee an imperishable

reward—an unfading glory? Make now thy choice. Do thy actions without any intention of pleasing God, and in a negligent, sluggish manner, and thou wilt find thy yoke a burthen of lead, galling thy neck, and crushing thee down into hell! Do them for God's sake, with care, as beseemeth one who labours for so great a Master; with love, as is but natural in a son who works for the best of Fathers, and it will be as a chaplet of roses round thy neck, every leaf of which will be precious as diamonds of priceless value, which will purchase for thee an everlasting reward.'

O my most bountiful Saviour! kind, good Master! give me that courage, that patience, that earnestness which will carry me into Thy vineyard, and keep me there during the heat of life's short day, till the balmy even-tide comes with its cessation from labour and its refreshing coolness, its enduring repose. Sustain me in the midst of my labour, by the thought of Thy approval and of the smile with which Thou wilt say to me: 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant!' But in order to merit this, I must needs perform all my appointed task, earnestly, and with a desire and an intention of pleasing Thee only. Do Thou purify my heart, and cast out of it all other desires save that of pleasing Thee. I will not seek myself, or my own ease, or my own glory. To please Thee shall, henceforth, be the aim of all my actions. For, of what avail will it be to me, or what profit will it bring to me, to seek myself; None whatever. If I seek myself, I shall, indeed, find myself, but I shall lose Thee my God, my only good, my beginning, my last end! What folly, is it not, on my part, negligently to perform my actions, without any desire, or any intention of pleasing Thee? I must, of necessity, go through the ordinary routine of my every-day life. I am bound by my state of life to pray, to meditate, to offer Sacrifice, to administer Sacraments, and to bear the heavy burthen of a priest's life. If I do these things without any reference to Thee, I am indeed bearing a heavy burthen, but to no purpose? My

labour is as aimless and as useless to me, as is to themselves the prison-labour of wretched convicts. Shall I then, dear Master, be so foolish as to labour to no purpose? No, my God! I will try to act in future with some little of that sound common-sense upon which men so much pride themselves. I must serve Thee. It is my joy and my privilege to do so. All the gain is on my side if I do; and all the loss if I do not. Thanks be to Thy unutterable goodness for thus suffering me to do somelittle for Thee. Therefore, I will serve Thee to the best of my power, and as far as I am able, in such a manner as Thou dost deserve to be served. I will work for Thee only. Then my labour will be light and easy. Thy yoke will be sweet; and I may confidently look forward with joy to the evening of my earthly career, when Thou wilt come to reward Thy children and to take them to Thy heavenly home, where labour and trial shall be no more.

*Conclusion.*

O my good God! now that the time which Thou hast mercifully given me for communing with Thee is drawing to a close, I humbly cast myself upon my knees in Thy sight, and from the very bottom of my heart, and with all the energy and the love of my soul, I thank Thee for this great grace, and for all those other graces which Thou hast vouchsafed to shower down upon me during my meditation. I thank Thee for all those benefits—general as well as particular—which, during my whole life, Thou hast never ceased to bestow upon me.

It is true I have nothing to offer Thee in return, save Thy own most precious gifts and graces. These are Thine; nevertheless, suffer me in my poverty to give and to devote to Thy service, even what upon so many titles is already Thine own. Therefore, I offer Thee all the thoughts which shall pass through my mind. Bless them, and make them be for Thee and of Thee. I offer Thee the affections of my heart. Mayest Thou be the source whence they spring and the ocean into which they will

eventually flow. I offer Thee my desires; may they be centred in Thee. Accept, also, my body with its powers, and my soul with its faculties, and grant that they may unite to labour for Thee during the whole course of this day.

*Resolution.*

In order that I may do this, I now firmly resolve to perform all my actions this day to please Thee. There is one, however, which I have heretofore but too often performed in order to win for myself a little human praise and glory. Therefore, I will take special care this day, to do N——for Thee, and carefully to watch over myself during the course of it, lest the devil should steal in and claim it for himself.

Dearest Mother Mary, who didst ever in all thy thoughts words and works, seek to please God only, under thy care I place my firm resolve. Pray for me that I may faithfully keep it, and help me by thy powerful intercession to carry it into effect. My good Angel, pray for me. My holy patron, make intercession for me. My dearest Jesus, before I leave Thy presence I humbly ask Thee to give me this special grace of which I stand in so great need, N——All honour, praise and glory be to Thee from Thy creatures, both now and for ever. Amen.

## CHAPTER X.

### *HINDRANCES OF MENTAL PRAYER.*

THERE is no enterprise of any pith or moment in the way of which some obstacle or other does not stand, to stop it altogether, or at least to retard its onward march. It would indeed be surprising, then, if the soul, in its pursuit of perfection—which is so materially aided by mental prayer—did not meet with anything which would endeavour to deprive it of an ally so powerful and so indispensable. As a matter of fact, the way of mental prayer literally bristles with opposing difficulties, first among which we may set down distractions of mind.

These swarm round the very entrance of the way of mental prayer; they line its path, and like vigilant marksmen upon the flanks of an invading army, worry and harass it, though they may not be able to bring it to a standstill. If these distractions are not repulsed and beaten off, they gather in so great force as altogether to annihilate prayer; for, they destroy its very life, which is attention of mind, and leave nothing but the worthless carcass behind. It is, therefore, of great importance to know the centres whence they draw their life and their strength in order there to attack and cripple them in their base of operations, if we cannot succeed in totally destroying them.

The first of these centres or strongholds is the imagination. It revolts against the empire which the reason endeavours to exert over the faculties of the mind and the powers of the body. It casts off its yoke and wills to be free from all trammels in order to rove at will, without let or hindrance of any kind. If possible, it will have nothing

that is not submissive to its pleasure; and, therefore, it gathers round its standard those adherents who pander to the predominant taste or passion of the soul. If pride holds the chief place in a man's heart, his imagination paints before his mind's eye pictures of his own excellence and splendid visions of future or of present greatness. In these visions, honours of every kind are poured forth with obsequious homage at his feet He wins for himself a world-wide fame; he performs brilliant exploits; he compels the admiration and excites the wonder of mankind; he outstrips all competitors in the race; vanquishes and humbles all rivals; forces applause from even the indifferent, and triumphantly bears off every prize. If gluttony is the ruling passion, the imagination pictures before the mind the delicacies and the savoury dishes which most delight the palate. The choleric man is hurried away by his imagination to dream of fancied slights and of unmerited rebuffs, till his soul is in a very tempest of passion. The revengeful see before them opportunities of retaliation which will serve admirably to make their enemies feel the full weight of their wrath. The voluptuous gloat over hideous scenes of carnal delights. The envious behold their rivals advanced to honourable posts which these rivals have not deserved, while they themselves are passed over; and the thought of this causes them to writhe with suppressed rage till they are ready literally to gnash at them with their teeth, and, like birds of prey, to rend them with beak and talon. By suggesting these and the like images to the intelligence, the imagination continually turns it aside from its purpose of praying to God and of acquiring virtue.

Besides the imagination, another very fertile source of distractions are the unguarded senses of our body. These are like so many gates to the soul; for, through them the external world is brought into communication with the spiritual faculties of our being. Hence, if they be left wide open, that is to say, if through them free ingress be given to all kinds of objects, the mind will soon be crowded with so

great a variety of noisy claimants for its attention, that their uproar will drown the low, soft voice of the Holy Spirit Who speaks not in tumult and confusion, but amid the calm and the solitude of retirement. The eye drinks in the shifting scene of men and of things that pass before its gaze like the gaudy tableaux of the theatre; the ear entranced by novelties of thought and of sound, collects, as in a store-room, a thousand different themes for cogitation; the touch, the smell, the taste, all nervously alive to every sensation, catch eagerly at whatever is presented to them, and send the impression of them tingling to the brain, where they minister to the imagination, and furnish it with food most pleasing to its palate.

Also, around each unmortified passion distractions swarm as thick as flies around a vessel filled with honey. For, when the affections of the heart go forth to any object and fasten themselves upon it, that object, of whatever nature it may be, catches the whole soul and holds it a prisoner, just as the fowler's snare entangles the feet of the birds which he wishes to capture. Its thoughts, its desires, its affections are in bonds. They are willingly so imprisoned, for that object has become its treasure, and where the treasure is, there is the heart also. The mind of one who is passionately fond of study is always upon that branch which is the object of his love. He whose heart is captivated by the love of any creature, is ever thinking of, and picturing to himself, that creature's excellence. The miser thinks of his wealth; the man of the world of his pleasures; the soldier of his campaigns; and, in a word, each of us of that thing which is the delight of his heart: 'Trahit sua quemque voluptas.' Upon this everyone is able to meditate, and, without any painful effort, to delight his heart for hours together. But, when he wishes to turn from it to those things which are not the delight of his heart, and for which he has no passion, he meets at once with well-nigh insuperable difficulties. At each instant the image of his love, of that for which his heart is on fire, which is, in fact, his passion, obtrudes itself between him and that upon which

he desires to think. When driven away, it returns. His very words and ideas are tinged with the object of his passion, and it is only by a violent effort, painfully sustained, that these thoughts and images can be excluded from the mind.

Moreover, when the mind is shallow, unstable, giddy, it is, by reason of its natural levity, filled with crowds of distracting thoughts. It cannot grasp ideas, and through want, perhaps, of mental culture, it is unable to hold itself fixed upon any object for three minutes together. The consequence is that everything which presents itself is pursued till some fresh object crosses its path. Then it follows after the latest impression, till some new idea strikes it, and this in turn is pursued and again speedily abandoned for another. When anyone of this character kneels down to pray or to meditate, he finds the process of consecutive thought as difficult as is the task of trying to hold an eel, which, do what he will, slips through his fingers. With the best of intentions he will, for instance, begin to reflect upon Our Lord's agony in Gethsemani; and straightway his imagination runs off with him. It pictures to his view the garden of Olives. He thinks of the huge trees, as he has seen them in paintings; these trees suggest to him other ideas and then he rambles off into thoughts of his school-days, when he used to pay furtive visits to the fruit-garden. He thinks of the companions who shared the perils and the spoils of those youthful exploits, and reflects how one of them became a lawyer, married and did well in the world; another he pursues to the far west, whither he emigrated years ago; another he follows into the cloister, and at last wakes up to the fact that the time of prayer has passed away, that he has been coursing over the world upon the wings of his imagination, and that he has not prayed at all, unless, indeed, his good-will may be counted as prayer.

Sometimes, however, these harassing and distracting images are sent to the most holy souls as a trial from God, Who often permits the evil spirit to annoy them, in

order to test their virtue, to make them more steady in the pursuit of perfection, and more disinterested in their service of Himself. Their state, in these circumstances, is truly pitiable, as we may see if we consult those who have been thus severely tried by the Lord. 'My thoughts,' says Job, 'are dissipated, tormenting my heart. They have turned night into day, and after darkness I hope for light again. To them may be applied David's words, which he addressed to God, when, during the revolt of Absolam, he fled into the desert of Edom: 'O God' my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh, O how many ways! In a desert land and where there is no way and no water; so in the Sanctuary have I come before Thee.'[2] Still more explicit is the plaint of the prophet Jeremias, when a like affliction was sent to prove him: 'When I cry and entreat, He hath shut out my prayer. He hath set a cloud before Him, that our prayer may not pass through.'[3]

Afflictions of this kind are not confined to the great Seers and the saintly men who lived under the old Dispensation. We cannot read the lives of any of those who, under the law of love, have carried their sacrifice of themselves to God, even unto the highest pitch of heroism, without being struck by the important part which similar desolations played in the perfecting of their sanctity. In a few graphic words St. Bernard puts before us the state of darkness which envelops them, and the utter helplessness which seizes upon and paralyses them in every limb: 'My heart,' he says, 'is dry; it is curdled like milk; it has become like earth without water; no tear of sorrow moistens my eye, so great is the hardness of my heart. Psalmody disgusts me; reading pleases me not; no, nor prayer either. If I wish to meditate, I can find no thought. Oh, what has become of that inebriation of mind, of that peace, of that serenity, of that joy which were the consolation of my exile here below?'[4]

[1] Job xvii. 11, 12. [2] Ps. lxii, 1 seq. [3] Jerem. Lamen. iii, 8, 44.
[4] Bernard, Serm. xxiv. In Cant.

Not the Saints only, but all who try with sincerity to lead a truly Christian life, are often forced to pass through this crucible, and are made to feel that those who wish to lead a godly life must be prepared to suffer persecution of this kind. At times prayer is a torture to them; Mass a wearisome labour; meditation next to an impossibility. Those sweet visits to Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament are now insipid; Communion, which used to set their hearts on fire, is a cold, heartless formality; their various practices of piety, once so delightful, are now, alas! little better than flat, stale, dreary impositions. We have said that this trial, this hindrance to mental prayer, comes from God, but as it is not unfrequently the result of our own negligence and a fitting punishment for a slovenly and tepid service of Our Lord, we must give some few marks by which we may be able to distinguish what is a trial from what is a well-merited chastisement. If the person who is thus apparently abandoned by God and handed over to be the sport of God's enemies and of his own frail nature, is one who has made great progress in virtue, one who has long and faithfully served the Lord, the presumption is that this trial has come upon him from God's merciful and all-wise hand. For, it is not usual for beginners to experience these desolations, nor would it be in accordance with that infinite wisdom which God displays in all His works, and in the guidance of His creatures to their destined end. In the beginning of a man's conversion, God deals with him as the loving father dealt with the returning prodigal. He lavishes upon him the tenderness of His love. For him the fatted calf is killed, the sumptuous feast prepared, the best robe brought forth. He opens wide His arms to receive him, He catches him to His heart. He kisses Him, and puts upon his finger the precious pledge of His love. But with those who are well-tried, who have grown gray in His service, He acts as with a friend whose interest He has at heart, and whom He wishes to enrich and to advance into positions of still greater trust. For this purpose He requires from them

signal acts of consummate virtue; and, therefore, He suffers them to be tried very severely, in order that they may deserve still more love and still more trust.

If, however, anyone who has but recently been converted to God should find himself enveloped in this spiritual darkness, and oppressed with this languor of heart, let him not be too ready to attribute it to the permission of God, or to look upon it as a trial sent to test of what metal he is made. There is, of course, a possibility that it is a trial; for, such trials are not confined exclusively to any period, or to any stage of proficiency; they are scattered with no sparing hand throughout the whole spiritual life. Nevertheless, let those who are but novices in the ways of God beware of thinking that what has been brought on by their own fault is a visitation from the merciful hand of God. Let them look well into themselves, and see whether Our Lord has not cause to address to them the words which He spoke to the Bishop of the Church of Ephesus: 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful, therefore, whence thou art fallen: and do penance, and do the first works.'[1] When they began to serve God, they were scrupulously exact in the performance of every duty; they watched for and they were obedient to the inspirations of grace; they mortified self and strove to cast it out of their hearts. Very soon all this changed. They began to weary of the sameness of their Father's house; they became neglectful of small things; they turned a deaf ear to the low, soft voice of conscience; they began to take their ease; not to put themselves out; to shirk that which is disagreeable in the service of their master; and now what are they? Is there the same humility of heart, the same spirit of submission to authority, the same delicacy of conscience that they had in the beginning? No; most of that has disappeared? They are vain, proud, sensual, and self-seeking. Need they think that God is trying their love and their fidelity by enveloping them in spiritual darkness?

[1] Apocal. ii. 4, 5.

The cause is before their very eyes. They have been unfaithful, sluggish, and slovenly servants, and the great Master has turned away His face from them. 'Be mindful, therefore, whence thou art fallen; and do penance, and do the first works. Or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place.'

Another sign by which we may know that this spiritual desolation is from God, is when, in spite of the pain and the misery which the soul suffers, it does not grow faint-hearted, or become careless in its service of Him. He has hidden His face, but that matters not; for, He is present, though invisible. The soul ceases not to do its utmost to be faithful, even in the minutest particular. There is no light, no sweetness, no consolation! The way is steep and rough and narrow; the burthen is heavy as lead; the yoke galls the neck; still the soul advances, and it is determined that, come what will, happen what may, it will not be unfaithful to its Lord. For it does, in very deed, advance, though that progress may be so little as to be well-nigh imperceptible. Anyone who is thus disposed need never fear when the hour of trial is upon him. A glance at his conduct will suffice to convince him that the darkness is not of his own creation; nor the languor, the stupor, the insensibility, induced by his own fault. He is made of true metal, out of which God will, if it so please Him, make a glorious Saint.

Now, it may seem strange that God should act in this way with His best friends, His chosen servants, and although it is not our place to question Him, or to say to Him: 'Why hast Thou done so?' yet we may reverently inquire into the reason of His conduct, for, the explanation of it will fill us with greater love for Him, and make us fall down in humble adoration before His infinite wisdom. Spiritual writers give us various reasons why God suffers His servants to be so severely tried. Upon these it will be well for us to reflect, and having mastered them, carefully to lay them up in the treasury of our minds, to be drawn thence for our comfort in the day of trial.

In the first place, we must always remember that God is absolute master of His own gifts. He can bestow them upon whomsoever He chooses, and no one thus favoured by Him has a *right* to anything which it may please Him to grant. We ourselves are His; so also is all that we have; therefore, both our labour and the fruit of it belong to Him; nor can we lay claim to aught as a return for service paid. Hence, even when we accomplish His divine Law to the letter, we are taught to consider ourselves as unprofitable servants; for, we have done nothing extraordinary, but simply that which we ought to have done. Consequently, Almighty God is in no way bound to favour us with spiritual sweetness in our service of Him. He is acting within His own right when He withholds it as well as when He chooses to bestow it. When the just man is thoroughly imbued with these truths, and when he has been solidly built upon the sure foundation of humility which they fix deeply in the soul, Our Lord often lavishes upon him His most precious graces, and then suddenly withdraws from him all sensible favours, leaving him in darkness, weariness, and disgust. This He does to teach him to esteem God Himself more than he esteems God's gifts. It is to test him on this point, and at the same time to make him understand that God is to be served for His own sake. If this did not happen, and if God in his infinite wisdom, did not cause it to happen, men would go on for years with the idea that they are loving and serving Him for His own sake, when in reality they are serving Him for themselves. They would be seeking and worshipping self, instead of the living God; they would be mere hirelings, adhering to Him because of their pay and of the comfortable quarters in which they find themselves. But, when God makes His service hard and rough and unpleasant—when there is nothing to be gained by it—when all things invite men to give it up and to seek rather what will bring them worldly emolument and sensual pleasure—if they then persevere in His service, it is a proof that they are really seeking God and not themselves.

Then there springs up in their bosoms that magnanimous love, that generosity, that heroism of devotedness which is willing to serve God *gratis*, and which is most forcibly expressed in that noble saying of Job: 'Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him.'[1]

In the next place, God often thus severely tries His chosen servants, in order to give them an opportunity of expiating their past infidelities and of blotting out the remnants of their faults and sins. There is no penance that so effectually touches the soul to the very quick as this does; inasmuch as while these sensible favours are withheld, it goes on serving Him without one smile to lighten its burthen, or one word to encourage it as it staggers onwards beneath its load. It is hard to tread in the steep, rugged path; but it is disheartening as well as difficult to be forced to climb it in the dark. What anguish, therefore, does not the just man, at times, experience, and how often is he reminded by it that he has deserved much worse for his sins, and by that remembrance he is taught to go forwards increasing in patience, by the crucifixion of his will, and by the denial of that self-love which he gratified by offending a Master Who now hides from him His bright and glorious face. When, at distant intervals, Our good God *does* once again turn to visit him, his soul is made far more attentive to such graces than it would be if they were matters of daily and of hourly occurrence. It seizes upon them with the avidity of a famishing wayfarer who is introduced to a rich store of food, and who lays by a provision for his future needs when passing through the barren, trackless, unwatered lands which must be traversed on his weary way.

Also, this bereavement of God's sensible presence and favours acts as a spur to urge the sluggish soul to strive after a closer union with its Lord. For, it gives it a foretaste of the nature of that torture which those are doomed to suffer who are for ever separated from Him their centre and their last end. If it is agony to feel that, do

[1] Job xiii. 15.

what we will, and strive as best we may, we cannot have with us Him Whom our soul loveth, even though we are not conscious of any sin, what will be the anguish unutterable which will invade and overwhelm our whole being, if we be separated eternally from Him Whose love is the sole object of our existence? This thought will fill, and it actually does fill, the souls of those who take the trouble to reflect upon it with so salutary a fear that, they are aroused from their lethargic sleep of lukewarmness, and made to struggle onwards with fervent will and undaunted courage in the way of God's commandments; for, they fear lest a fate so dreadful may overtake them, and separate them from Him without Whom heaven itself would be a very hell.

Another signal advantage to be gained by the withdrawal of God's favour, is the acquisition of that tenderness and compassion for others which it causes to spring up in our hearts. These hearts are oftentimes as insensible to the woes of our fellow-men, as hard and as barren of pity, as the arid rocks which lie scorching beneath the burning glare of an African sun. They are so occupied with their own cares, their own well-being, their own projects and prospects, that a thought for others rarely, if ever, enters them, and even this thought is received with that cold conventional civility which we extend to the greatest strangers. But when the hand of God is stretched out towards them, and when His rod strikes them, there leaps forth a clear and limpid stream of pity and compassion, from which the weary and the heavily burthened may draw refreshment and strength. For, he who knows experimentally what it is to be left in the dark, to be dry and arid as are the desert sands, to be tortured with fears, doubts and scruples, will understand the like maladies when he sees them in others, and will receive those who are sorely afflicted by them with kindly looks, and address them with gentle, comforting words, which will cause them to plod along their weary way rejoicing, full of consolation, hope, and courage. These reasons, we consider, are amply

sufficient to account for God's treatment of His servants. If they be called to mind in the hour of trial, they will be as a lamp to our feet in the darkness, and as a staff in our hands to support our tottering steps and protect us from the attacks of those prowling dogs which attempt to frighten us from the narrow way, and to turn our face back from the kingdom of God.

Having examined the sources whence distractions take their rise, we must in the next place consider the remedies which ought to be employed in order to rid ourselves of them, or at least, so to diminish them that our prayer may not be rendered utterly useless.

When these distractions arise from the imagination, which by the indulgence given to the passions has been filled with all sorts of vain and sinful images, so that the mind is continually running in pursuit of these phantoms, the best remedy to apply to this evil is quietly to call back the imagination as soon as the intelligence perceives that it is wandering. Then, instead of chaining it down by a painful effort, let the soul humble itself before God, and acknowledge to Him and to the whole Court of heaven its pitiable weakness. This will be an excellent prayer; it will please God, Who, seeing our goodwill, will come to our assistance by the powerful aid of His Grace, and thus, by persevering in this course, we shall at last gain so great a command over ourselves that, at a word from the will, the imagination will be at rest; it will act as an humble servant, aiding the other powers to adhere to and to converse with God.

If distractions are caused by the unguarded state of our senses, the remedy to be applied must be a vigilant watchfulness over them. Since it is through them that the images of external things are carried into the mind, we must act in their regard as we do with the houses in which we live. When we wish to prevent the curious from knowing all that is passing within, we draw down the blinds; when we fear the intrusion of unwelcome visitors, we are careful to inform our servants that for such persons we are

to be considered 'not at home'; if we expect to be attacked by thieves, we lock and bolt our doors; we stand on the watch. Let us act in the same way when we kneel to pray. Let each enter the chamber of his heart, and draw down the blinds by closing his eyes against all that is passing around him. Let him shut the door by closing his ears and locking up his other senses. Let all thoughts and cares that are not to the purpose of prayer, be treated as unwelcome visitors, for whom we are to be considered 'not at home.' As for that which is sinful, or which is calculated to steal our affections away from God, let us stand fully armed against it with the powerful name "Jesus" to scare it away the moment that it approaches nigh unto us. Conduct such as this will dry up the source of those distracting thoughts and images which pass into our souls through the unguarded senses.

Our passions, also, very frequently are the causes of much of our distraction at prayer; for, they raise in the soul so great a tumult as to render it impossible for it to attend to anything else than to that for which they are clamouring. The only means of putting an end to distractions which owe their origin to this source, is completely to bring the passions themselves under subjection. It is as impossible for the soul to pray to God until this is done, as it would be for a professor to study in a class-room full of unruly and rebellious boys. He cannot read a passage, or follow out an argument, or take note of any fact in the pages before him, because of the murmuring, the shuffling and the hum of the chafing spirits around him. If he is weak enough to suffer such misconduct in his presence, or to show signs of timidity, his power is at an end, and he becomes the sport and the plaything of those whom he ought to rule. But if, either upon the first faint hum of discontent, or upon any sign of disobedience, he rise from his desk and let determined will be seen flashing from his eye and written on every line of his face, the majority will subside into a terrified silence, and he will be able to deal with the leading refractory spirits in as summary a way as he pleases.

Thus must we act with those passions which, as soon as we kneel to pray, raise a storm of distracting thoughts in our minds. We must at once show our determination to rule them. At once we must seize upon the rebels, and vigorously compel them to be at rest. Therefore, he who wishes to be a man of prayer, must first endeavour to be supreme master in his own heart. He must never suffer his authority there to be set at naught. Let him with a strong hand beat down sensuality, pride, ambition, anger, envy and the rest, and then repress them, the moment that they give the least sign of insubordination. These will become obedient scholars, and he will be able to teach them lessons of wisdom that will hereafter bring great credit and emolument to himself.

The remedy of all distractions springing from giddiness, levity, and frivolity of mind, is the firm determination to steady it, and to weight it in a way which will keep it down, in spite of itself, to some fixed form of prayer. The mind of the frivolous, the giddy, the light-headed, may very aptly be compared to a horse that has not yet been broken in, that has not felt bridle, or bit, or whip. At first he cannot, without difficulty, be caught; and when caught cannot, without still greater difficulty, be held; and even when the bit is thrust between his jaws, and a skilful and daring rider is set upon his back, he rears, and kicks, and swerves to the right and to the left, and he cannot be forced to do anything but his own untamed will. Soon, however, the firm will, the strong and steady arm, the galling spur and the stinging whip of the rider, force him this way and that; they urge him forwards when he would go back, and hold him back when he would go forwards, till at last he is tamed, and trained to do, not his own will, but the will of him who guides and drives him.

So it is with the mind. Before it is trained, it goes from one thing to another at its own pleasure, never resting long anywhere, or upon anything. But when it is taken in hand, and compelled to follow up some line of thought, or to search through some intricate question, it

begins to be obedient to the will, and to stay wheresoever it is desired. The first thing, then, to be done by one who is frivolous, giddy, light-headed, is to act during the day just as if he had made a good mental prayer in the morning, by performing his actions for God, and doing them as well as he possibly can. Then he should accustom himself frequently to make fervent ejaculatory prayers and to go on with them as long as the impulse to make them lasts. This will accustom him to elicit them when he kneels to perform his exercise of mental prayer, and will help him to do so the moment he perceives that he has wandered off from the subject proposed, in order to disport himself amid the frivolous and ill-timed thoughts into which his roving fancy and unstable mind have hurried him. Lastly, to such as these we cannot do better than most urgently recommend those three forms of prayer of which St. Ignatius[1] counsels the use to those who are unable to follow out the more elaborate method which is deservedly held in so high esteem.

The first of these consists in reflecting in the following manner upon the commandments of God, the seven deadly sins, the three powers of the soul, and the five senses. Before beginning we should consider for a few moments what it is that we are about to do; then fervently ask God for grace to know in what we have failed, and for help better to perform our duties for the future. After this, we should select one or two points in which we know from past experience that we are wont most frequently to offend, and upon each we should put to ourselves five or six questions, such as the following: (1) To what does this Commandment oblige me? (2) What does it order, and what does it forbid? (3) What reasons are there why I should keep it? (4) How have I kept it in the past? (5) How do I wish to keep it in the future? The reflections which will arise from the consideration of these questions will produce affections of humility, fear, and attachment to our duty. Out of these affections we should make various acts corresponding to the emotions

[1] Exercitia Spirit., Tres orandi modi.

which have sprung up in our hearts, and then with a most fervent prayer to God, terminate our exercise upon each point.

The second method consists in paraphrasing some vocal prayer, such as the 'Our Father,' the Creed, or the 'Anima Christi.' The words or the phrases should be dwelt upon as long as they either furnish matter for thought, or excite affections in our hearts; and when they do not rouse up the emotions of our souls, or when, after having done so, they begin to lose their virtue, we must pass on to the next, and continue to act in this way till the prayer is ended. An example will give a clearer notion than anything else, of the manner in which this should be done. Let us take the prayer, 'Anima Christi,' and see how it may, in this way, be made use of to keep the mind attentive during prayer:

'*Soul of Christ*,[1] adorned with all the graces and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, *sanctify me*, by a lively faith, a steadfast hope, a perfect charity, which tribulations, anguish, and even death itself, can neither shake nor weaken. *O Soul*, which art the soul of Christ by natural indwelling in His sacred body, be Thou likewise mine by Thy gracious aid and working within me, and *sanctify me*, with pious thoughts and holy affections. Be Thou the soul and the life of my soul; for without Thee all my life is but death.'

'*Body of Christ*, given for us, not only to most bitter death, but for the life-giving food of our soul, the remedy of immortality, and an ever-abiding sacrifice, *save me*. O divine head, wherein are all the treasures of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God, rule and direct me. O most mild and benignant eyes, so often dimmed with tears for me, look down upon me. O tongue of my Saviour, which hast the words of everlasting life, teach me. O most mighty hands, at whose touch diseases fled, and the blind saw, and the dead were raised, take away all the languors and the diseases of my soul and of my body; scatter my darkness, and restore to me the life of grace. O feet of Jesus, so beautiful, bringing salvation to the whole world, would that with

[1] From the 'Cœleste Palmetum.'

Magdalene I might embrace you and kiss you, and so find pardon of all my sins! O breast most lovely, shrine of the Godhead, altar of love, unite my heart to Thine, and enkindle in it Thy love. So to me to live will be Christ, and to die will be gain.'

'*Blood of Christ*, poured out for me, *inebriate me*, that I may strive to give Thee back love for love, to suffer death for death, and ever steadfastly and generously to resist all sin, even unto blood.'

'*Water out of the side of Christ*, flowing from His riven heart, *wash me*. More and yet more wash me, and cleanse me from my sin, that through that pierced side I may be admitted to embrace His Sacred Heart.'

'*Passion of Christ*, strong and mighty Passion, which bore the whole burthen of our sins, *strengthen me;* fortify me against all adversities; impart to me courage to endure with strong and glad heart all contumely and insult for the sake of my Lord Jesus Christ.'

Thus the whole prayer may be paraphrased, and upon this model we may learn to pursue the same method with any other of the vocal prayers which are in use in the Church.

The third method differs from the preceding only in this: that we pause but for a moment upon each word. Hence it is little more than a vocal prayer recited slowly and with great attention. Anyone who finds very great difficulty in keeping his attention fixed during the time of meditation, will be able, by means of one of these methods, to spend very profitably the time allotted for that most excellent duty. They will accustom the mind steadily to fix itself, and to pursue a line of thought. In the course of a few years it will thus acquire so great a command over itself as to keep itself well employed during the time of these mental exercises. A man may thus ascend by degrees from one stage to another, till, with the aid of God's grace, he will at last be able with ease and delight to go through this very important duty of Religious Life.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *SCRUPLES.*

ANOTHER great hindrance, not only of mental prayer, but of all spirituality whatever, are scruples. These are defined to be 'certain waverings of mind concerning the malice of some action, past, present, or to come, about which we can arrive at no solution.' The consequence of such a mental condition as this is that anyone who has the misfortune to be labouring under it is of opinion, or he suspects, or doubts, or anxiously fears, that his actions have been, or that they are, or that they will be evil. As long as the scruple causes him to suspend his judgment, it is a simple apprehension; but when he makes up his mind to act either against this apprehension, or in accordance with it, what was a simple state of suspense becomes an absolute judgment or doubt properly so called, and his conscience will then be either a doubtful or an erroneous one. From this it will be seen how apt is the term by which such a state of mind is called *scrupulous*, for the word *scrupus* is the Latin for a small pebble which at times gets into our shoes. This does not altogether bring us to a standstill, but it hurts us and impedes our progress, just as a scruple produces mental perplexity and makes us 'halt between two opinions.'

The scruple which causes such a state of indecision is said to be *rational* when the motive from which it springs, though insufficient to cause us to suspend or to refuse our consent, is yet weighty enough to fill us with fear. We should consider a man to be labouring under such a scruple as this, who hesitates about performing an act which he knows may be looked upon as lawful, inasmuch as there

are probable opinions to support him in his view; and yet, after diligent search for authorities which would add to the probability, he is unable to find any, and is therefore obliged to act with an uncomfortable feeling that he may, after all, be in the wrong. Again; a scruple is said to be *irrational* when the motive for suspending the judgment is insufficient, and when a person has not cause for even prudent fear. Of this nature are all scruples that cause us to hesitate in matters which either are invested with all possible certainty, or which are, at least, morally certain.

Truly pitiable is the condition of anyone tormented by this mental malady which superinduces a state of unrest as full of strange fancies and of hideous spectres as are the dreams of a typhus-stricken patient of the fever hospital. In all things, without exception, he is able to discover sin; and in consequence of this, he worries his hapless Confessor with never-ending self-accusations and consultations about his spiritual maladies and symptoms. Yet, though so eager to seek for and to listen to advice, he will never believe that which is given to him, or at best, he will only half believe it, and then will pester others with the same doubts and difficulties that had, to all intents and purposes, been pulverised by his ordinary Confessor. There is no end to his self-introspection. He is lynx-eyed to detect and to pounce upon faults, and wearisomely prolix and minute in his explanations of them. When he prays he is uncertain whether he has offended God, or whether he has satisfied his obligations; he therefore either breaks off in the midst of his devotions to begin them afresh, or repeats that which he has already oftentimes finished. In addition to this, he not unfrequently, by reason of his ridiculous behaviour, makes both himself and his religion contemptible in the eyes of the world. He shakes his head; he distorts his countenance; he sighs; he groans, and utters spasmodic ejaculations which startle and amuse the bystanders. He is continually perplexed whether he has or he has not confessed all his sins; whether he has duly examined his conscience; whether he

has omitted some circumstance which might possibly alter the nature of the sin. He doubts about the validity of past confessions, and wishes to repeat them. He asks himself continually: 'Had I, at the moment of absolution, true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment?' Then, turning to the present time, he is tortured with anguish about the actual state of his conscience: 'Am I not at this moment in the state of mortal sin? Am I not committing sin by reading this book?' Even the future seems to him full of peril: 'If I enter the public museum, shall I not be exposing myself to sin, if there should happen to be any immodest pictures there?' and so on in a thousand different ways does he keep his soul upon the rack till he becomes a burthen to himself, an object of ridicule to the cold, cynical, unfeeling world, and a source of worrying anxiety to the Director whose unhappy lot it is to guide him in his doubts and perplexities.

This is no slight evil, nor is the mischief slight which it causes to the soul. Therefore, if we are happily free from it, our aim should be still to preserve ourselves from a disease which is so fatal to our spiritual well-being; but if we should unfortunately have contracted it, we should be eager to rid ourselves of it as speedily as possible. Therefore, in order, to aid the efforts of those engaged in a work so praiseworthy and so necessary, we will first point out the sources whence these scruples take their rise, and then suggest the remedies which spiritual writers deem most suitable to effect a complete cure.

Two sources are usually assigned as the well-springs whence scruples flow as from their fountain-head. These are the soul and the body. The causes of scruples which flow from the soul are either intrinsic to the soul itself or extrinsic. Intrinsic causes are: first, ignorance, which makes one unable to discriminate between a temptation to sin, and the consent which the will gives to the evil that is suggested to it; secondly, obstinacy of will, which causes one to adhere with too great tenacity to one's own opinions, and to follow one's own lights; thirdly, an

excessive fear of God's justice, and a feeble confidence in His mercy and goodness; fourthly, an excessive desire to shun even the appearance of sin, and a wish to have mathematical certainty as to what is sinful and what is not; fifthly, badly regulated austerity and overmuch solitude, which cause the mind to brood over its defects and to prey upon itself, till it engenders an over-great sensibility of conscience.

The extrinsic causes of scruples are: first, the permission of God, Who, for our trial and greater perfection, suffers us at times, to be subjected to this searching ordeal; secondly, the temptation of the devil, who, if unable to withdraw the soul from its allegiance by the usual baits with which he catches men, endeavours to do so by thus darkening their intellect and by depriving them of their natural guide in the ways of God; thirdly, the company of the scrupulous; only persons predisposed to scrupulosity will be infected with it from this source, just as those in delicate health or those who have some predisposing cause, usually catch disease from those infected with it; fourthly and lastly, the reading of spiritual works written by men of the rigorist school of theology, will often engender in the minds of the timid and inexperienced a whole host of tormenting scruples.

Scruples which arise from the body flow from two sources: first, from a cold, melancholy, and hypochondriacal temperament; secondly, from a feeble intellect. With these sources of this mental disease before our eyes, we may now, with greater probability of success, proceed to point out the remedies which must be employed to dry them up, and so to put an end to the evil in the very place from which it springs.

We may say that ignorance is generally the chief source of scruples which afflict the soul from within. For, as a rule, the vast majority of men have not a very clear notion of their duties, or of the extent to which those duties bind them; hence, when their conscience is awakened and roused into activity by the contemplation of the great truths, they

are constantly perplexed as to whether this is right or that is wrong, whether this is obligatory or that is left to their own good pleasure. Moreover, there is among beginners a vast amount of ignorance concerning the workings of their mental faculties; and, therefore, they regard as deliberate acts of their will, those which are not human actions at all. The consequence is that their imagination is to them a source of endless trouble, keeping them constantly in doubt and perplexity as to whether or not they have been guilty of something gravely offensive to God. The chief remedy, therefore, for all such difficulties as these is, first to be thoroughly well instructed in the duties and the obligations of one's State; and among these to make a sharp and clear distinction between those which are of obligation, and those which are of counsel only. In the next place, everyone should endeavour to understand the workings of his intellectual being; and for this end we will give as brief and clear a notion of them as will suffice for all practical purposes. But in order to be able to follow out these mental operations, and to know when we are acting as men, and when we are not, it will be necessary to say a few words about *human acts*.

We may start, then, with the widest definition of an act, and say that it is 'a movement of the mind'; for, all the actions performed by man, whether they are internal or external, may be traced to his mind or soul, which is the principle or source whence they flow. Now, as there are three ways in which a man may perform his actions, these actions have been divided by philosophers into three kinds. Some of these are performed by man in a merely natural way, inasmuch, namely, as he is a living being, and these are called *merely natural* or organic acts, such as is the act of breathing. Others, again, are effected by him, inasmuch as he is a rational animal, but yet they are not executed by him in a rational way, that is to say, with the advertence of his understanding and with the concurrence of his will. Such are all acts performed by men who are beside themselves, or asleep, or completely abstracted. We read

of one who, in this state of abstraction, swam his horse across a river, without being conscious either of the peril which he was incurring, or of the water which was eddying around his person. Another, while walking by the sea-shore, picked up a pebble, and, all the time wrapped in thought, gravely put it into his pocket, and then, taking out his watch, flung it with all his might into the sea. Another, when called by his servant to receive a distinguished personage, entered the room where the visitor was awaiting his arrival, and without taking the slightest notice of him, seated himself in a chair, and remained for a considerable time buried in deep thought. Such acts as these are called '*Actus hominis*'—acts of man; nevertheless, they are not dignified with the name '*human acts*,' because they proceed not from man in his capacity of a rational creature. In order to be ranked in that category, they must be performed with advertence of mind and with deliberation of will. Then they are freely and determinately produced by him, and for that reason, only such acts are capable of goodness or of malice.

If this fact be kept clearly before the mind, it will serve to do away with a multitude of scruples. For, there cannot be sin or moral guilt in any act either internal or external, in the performance of which there is not any advertence of the intelligence, or any consent of the will. For, it is by the will that every act of sin is consummated. Now, the will, as all philosophers teach, is a blind power. It cannot either desire or refuse anything, unless it is first made conscious of that thing's presence by the advertence of the intelligence. Therefore, when this advertence is absent, there is no consent of the will, and consequently no sin. By bringing this clear light of truth to bear upon any matter which is enveloped in a dense fog of scrupulous ideas and notions, we shall be able to dispel the obscuring vapours wrapping it round and making it appear gigantic in its proportions. A person may, for instance, while musing upon some unimportant trifle, have presented to his imagination an evil picture which fascinates and

stirs up his baser passions. He sees the whole action or idea fully displayed before him, and to all appearances he is taking a deep interest in it, and is accepting it with his will. Suddenly something occurs to call his intelligence into action, and it perceives at once that what he is musing upon is illicit, is immoral. With a start of horror he hastens to wipe out the odious phantasm from his mind. He is then troubled about what has occurred. Because he has been thinking upon evil, he begins to imagine that he must have assented to it; and he is harassed with perplexing doubts and fears. Now, if this person is fully aware of the mental process involved in thought, he will see at a glance that this phantasm of evil and the thoughts engendered by it, are by no means *voluntary*. The intelligence did not at first advert to the presence of the evil, but when it did, the will at once showed its abhorrence of the evil, and rejected it. Hence, the act of thought in which the soul was indulging—if, indeed, it may be called thought, and not rather the fanciful painting of the imagination—was in reality not a human act, but an 'actus hominis,' since it was performed without the advertence of the intelligence and without the consent of the will. Therefore, in such an act there cannot be any sin whatever, for:

> 'Evil into the mind of God or man
> May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
> No spot or blame behind.'[1]

From what has been said, we may conclude that the first general remedy to be applied to those scruples which, being without any solid foundation, are irrational, is to treat them with contempt.[2] Such was the determination arrived at by the Jews, who through a scrupulous adherence to the ceremonial law ordering the observance of the Sabbath, suffered themselves to be slaughtered by the soldiers of Antiochus, rather than profane the holy day by taking up arms and manfully using them in self-defence. They came

[1] Paradise Lost, Book V. 117.
[2] Schram., Theol. Myst., Tom. I. Cap. II. § 58.

to the conclusion that a ceremonial or disciplinary law ceased to bind when its observance entailed calamities so terrible; and that it was even better and more meritorious in the sight of God to despise the scruple, to take up arms, and to fight for country and for life.[1] The Apostle gave a similar counsel to the early Christians who scrupled to eat meats which had been offered to idols. He bade them cast aside all fear and act freely when this could be done without giving scandal.[2] Hence, in spite of the fear and the uncertainty engendered by scruples, we ought to contemn them and follow the judgment of our conscience when, after prudent examination, it is unable to discover anything unlawful in what we wish to do. For, it is idle to expect that in moral matters we can have *absolute* certainty. God has never promised to give it to us; and in seeking to arrive at it, we are animated by a love of ourselves far more than by a love of Almighty God. We should, therefore, be content to allow Him to lead us to heaven in the way which it has pleased Him to appoint; that is, in a state of uncertainty as to our spiritual condition; 'for it matters little,' says St. Bonaventure, 'whether we know, or we do not know, that we have charity, provided only that we actually possess it.' Therefore, our advice to the scrupulous who have no solid reason for their scruples, is to despise them.

They will despise them if, when harassed about the manner in which they either celebrate or hear Mass, recite the Canonical Hours, pronounce the words of consecration, administer the Sacraments, and the like, they accustom themselves not to repeat, or to begin them anew. Such repetitions usually end in making all these prayers and duties so insipid, that the second time we go over them we usually say them in a more distracted manner than we did at first. Also, they will be contemning their scruples, if they never suffer themselves to repeat their past confessions, when urged to do so by a scrupulous conscience. Let them rather confide in the mercy of God, Who instituted the

[1] 1 Mach. ii. 41. [2] 1 Cor. viii.

sacrament of Penance to be a fountain of consolation, and not an instrument of torture. If they are troubled by temptations against purity or against faith, let them remember what has already been said about the operations of thought; there can be no sin in that in which there is no advertence, or in which, though the intelligence does advert to the presence of evil, yet the will does all that in it lies to reject and to detest it. Should cruel doubts about their present state, or about their predestination, fill them with terror and disquiet, let them walk confidently in the way of God's commandments, and scorn these vain phantoms which the devil dresses up to alarm those whom he is unable to conquer.

To the soul's contempt for scruples, it is advisable also to join that grand remedy for all our ills—earnest and persevering prayer, both on the part of the scrupulous person himself, and on the part of those interested in his welfare. To this, let him also add mortification, both internal and external. With respect to this latter means prudence will suggest that nothing be undertaken except with the advice of the Confessor; for such practices of piety sometimes have the effect of augmenting rather than of diminishing the evil.

Another excellent remedy for scruples is to aim at great purity of heart; 'for wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins.'[1] Commenting upon this text, Cornelius á Lapide says that 'the inspired author is speaking of that practical wisdom, or in other words, of that prudent motive which makes us act according to God, and the absence of which is so conspicuous in all who are troubled by scruples. The withdrawal of it is oftentimes a just punishment inflicted by God, upon those who have not cared to be rigorous with themselves in matters in which there is no danger of deception. He takes it away in order to lead them back to greater fervour, by causing them to be a burthen to themselves through venial defects and insufferable languor;

[1] Wisd. i 1. 4.

almost to fall into mortal sin; and to find no rest in God or in creatures; and as the scrupulous are guided only by servile fear, God permits them to be subject to an *exaggerated* fear of mortal sin in matters in which it is not to be feared at all.' This is just; because the scrupulous fear the infringement of only grave obligations; they will not be generous with God, or strive to please Him in matters of little moment. Purity of heart, therefore, is necessary for the acquisition of that wisdom which will enable the scrupulous to trample upon their vain fears, and to act in all things with that prudence which is according to God.

In order to obtain it, they must adopt the following means. Let them every day be careful to make an examination of conscience, general as well as particular. But in this they must not search too minutely; a mere glance will suffice to enable them to distinguish what is certain from what is uncertain. Then, with great compunction, let them humbly grieve for their shortcomings and ask pardon of them from God. In the next place, let them never fail to approach every week to the sacred tribunal of penance, for which their daily examination will have prepared them; and also to draw nigh with great devotion to the Holy Table. Above all things they must be resolved not to yield to that itching desire, with which most scrupulous persons are tormented, of frequently making general confessions of their whole life. After having once done this, let the past be for them as if it had never been; and let them never dream of confessing any past sin unless, in the first place, they are certain that it is a grievous sin, in the next, that it has never yet been confessed. If they are in doubt about either of these points, let them consider it as a scruple which ought to be despised, and then let them trouble themselves no more about it.

But of the remedies which sage experience has taught the guides of consciences to be best adapted for the cure of scruples, there is none so generally recommended, so urgently insisted upon, as blind obedience to the directions

of those whom the scrupulous either have chosen for their guides or have accepted as having been divinely appointed for their direction by competent authority. The wisdom of this advice is manifest; for, scruples envelop the intelligence of him who is afflicted with them in a fog as dense as are those which periodically render impassable the thoroughfares of our great Metropolis. The mental eye can see nothing clearly, and therefore the soul is fearful of going either this way or that, lest it should fall, or should strike violently against some opposing obstacle. Therefore, a guide is necessary who has a light powerful enough to pierce the fog, and who is intimately acquainted with every tortuous road and byway. Having, then, put himself under the direction of such a one, let the scrupulous man blindly obey him; for, to all these lawfully constituded guides, Our Lord has said: 'He that heareth you, heareth Me.'[1] No doubt the temptation to mistrust them will, at times, be very strong; and the way which they point out will appear to be dangerous and leading to destruction. Nevertheless, let him not despise them; let him listen to their words and follow the advice of the Wise Man, who says: 'Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thy own prudence. In all thy ways think of Him, and He will direct thy steps. Be not wise in thy own conceit.'[2] But while giving this advice, it must not be supposed that we counsel him not to form his own conscience. All that we mean to say is that he should not prefer his own judgment to that of his guide. He should conform it with his guide's by some such reasoning as this: 'My scruples blind me so that I cannot see; or, at least, they draw over my mind's eye a film which obscures its vision and hence all things seem to me monstrous and awry. Here, however, is a prudent, clear-sighted, and conscientious man who knows the paths through which he is the guide, lawfully appointed to conduct all who apply to him for assistance. His judgment, therefore, is far more likely to be correct

[1] St. Luke x. 16. [2] Prov. iii. 5, 7.

than mine; for my judgment is founded upon dictates of reason which, from my present state of mind, are most likely to be wrong. Therefore, it will be wisdom on my part to set aside my own opinions and judgment and follow his.' By doing this he will be acting upon 'a formed conscience,' or upon a practical dictate of reason, and not in doubt or in a state of perplexity.

Hence, another remedy for scruples is fearlessly to act against them when they arise from a simple apprehension or from an absolute judgment about some action considered in itself, such as would be this simple judgment: 'In the action which I have just performed, perhaps I have sinned.' Whether the apprehension arising from such a judgment continues or it does not, let it be despised, and let the person harassed by this empty fear reassure himself by this sound reason: 'There can be no sin in doing what my Director either bids me do, or allows me to do.' In this, as well as in the former case, the scrupulous person may form a reliable judgment about the lawfulness, or the unlawfulness of any act. If he is unable to quiet his scruple, he will fall into a state of doubt, from which he must free himself before he can act. For, when there is question of the lawfulness, or the unlawfulness of any act, the person who has a real doubt, that is to say, who is in a state of suspense between opposite conclusions, cannot act lawfully unless he first resolves his doubt. The reason is because his absolute judgment that something is unlawful, no matter how slight the foundation may be whereon it rests, is incompatible with his other absolute judgment that it is lawful. Such a judgment as this last, a man must necessarily have before he can proceed to act. But if his judgment that some act is unlawful is not absolute, that is, if it is accompanied by some anxiety, or doubt, or fear, it is then compatible with his judgment that the act is lawful, no matter whether he fears or he does not fear that the act is unlawful.

Lastly, in dealing with the scrupulous, that method of treatment which is called *epikeia*, or the favourable but just

interpretation of a law, is largely made use of, as a remedy to free them from their torturing and most pernicious mental disease. St. Antoninus gives seven cases in which this *epikeia* may be employed.[1]

When any law or any clause of a law gives rise to two interpretations, of which the one is strict and severe, the other mild and favourable to the liberty of the subject, the scrupulous person should set aside the strict interpretation and follow that which is more favourable to his liberty.

As no one is obliged to do what is impossible, those things which are morally impossible or extremely difficult, in the case of others, are considered to be *absolutely* impossible in the case of the scrupulous.

Neither human laws nor even the Commandments of God[2] oblige anyone, when fidelity in their observance would become ridiculous in the eyes of wise and discreet men. A vow would not bind in similar circumstances.

When a scrupulous man is in doubt, he may act as virtuous and well-instructed men are accustomed to act in similar cases.

In all positive human laws, a reasonable custom is the best interpreter of their meaning ; and when such a custom prevails against a law of this nature, it abrogates it.

In order to set all consciences at rest, it must be borne in mind that excommunication is never incurred, at least before the tribunal of conscience, unless a person has been guilty of a mortal sin to which that excommunication is annexed.

A grave danger sufficiently excuses a person from the observance of a human law, whether that law is a civil or an Ecclesiastical Law.

In order to enable persons to make a rational and lawful use of the preceding rules, it must be observed that all such opinions should be strongly disapproved of, as teach the

[1] St. Ant., Sermon, Cap. III.

[2] That is to say, the Commandments of God as they are sure to be interpreted by scrupulous persons.

scrupulous to follow all opinions that are broad but less safe; for nothing is more calculated to increase their anxieties and their scruples.

In the next place, the scrupulous may be forced to accomplish a precept as others accomplish it, or to omit it altogether. By this means the one or the other of these two things will happen: either the fear of a graver scruple will keep them within reasonable bounds, or it will excuse them from obedience to the precept because of the irrational manner in which they will accomplish it, as well as of the risk they will run of losing their reason. It was thus that St. Ignatius delivered from scruples one who was tormented about the recitation of the Divine Office. He fixed for him a certain time to complete it, and when that time had elapsed, he forbade him to recite any more.

Finally, the scrupulous should be warned not to repulse temptations to sin by external gestures and signs. They should keep quiet, and calmly and rationally go on with what they are doing. If they happen not to be doing anything in particular, let them turn to some indifferent action, which will serve to divert the current of their thoughts. If, however, the temptation should increase in violence, let them say very quietly and with great fervour; 'O good Jesus, save me, I perish!' and He Who awoke from His slumber at that cry, and hushed the tempest upon the Galilean Sea, will stretch forth His hand and calm the angry storm.

## CHAPTER XII.

### *RATIONAL SCRUPLES.*

THUS far we have dealt with those scruples which, being without any solid foundation, are justly said to be irrational. Not all scruples, however, can with equal truth be set down definitely in this category; for, there are some which have a basis of reason whereon to rest, and on that account they ought not to be treated with the same measure of contempt, that is deservedly meted out to the others. It would, perhaps, be more correct to give the name 'over-delicate conscientiousness' to such scruples as these; for, this would at once point out the source from which they spring, and sharply mark them off from all those that flow from quite another fountain-head. The difference of their origin is, as a matter of fact, easily discernible, from the difference of their effects upon the persons afflicted with them. Irrational scruples are nearly always accompanied by great laxity of conscience upon other points which are sometimes of grave importance; while all the stringency of view and all the rigour of practice are reserved for trifles, which cause a smile of good-natured contempt to play upon the lips of sensible men.

In no class of men was scrupulosity of this nature more discernible than in the Scribes and the Pharisees, against whom Our Lord launched forth denunciations so terrible. In their observance of the ceremonial law, they carried it to the highest pitch of fanaticism; but, with strange inconsistency, to which they themselves seem to have been stone-blind, they curiously enough neglected the very substance and spirit of the Law which taught them charity, mercy, and faith. They never failed to go to the houses of widows

to pray long prayers, but they cared not about the waste of substance which this entailed upon the poor bereaved women, who, meanwhile had to bear the expense of their support. In order to make a convert they spared no pains, they shrank from no labour, from no inconvenience; but, when once he was won over to their sect, they neglected him, and by their evil example made him twofold more the child of hell than they themselves were. They feared not to swear by the Temple and by the altar of God, but they abstained with care from swearing by the gold of the Temple or by the gift that was on the altar, lest they should become debtors to the altar and to the Temple. They made clean the outside of the platter and of the cup, but paid little attention to that internal purity of heart, without which the ceremonial purifications of the Law were but an empty, meaningless ritual. Hence, their entire religious spirit was epigrammatically summed up by Our blessed Lord in one pregnant sentence: 'They strain at a gnat and swallow a camel,' and they themselves were likened by Him unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness.[1]

Rational scruples, however, have quite a different effect upon the soul, and the outcome of them is a totally different line of conduct. They arise from a living faith, of which the keen and piercing glance takes in and fully embraces the great truths which ought to be the springs of human actions. This faith bodies forth, in an almost palpable form, before the minds of those who are rationally scrupulous, the holiness, the truth, and the eternal justice of God; and therefore, the slightest transgression against a majesty so awful, assumes in their eyes gigantic proportions and a malice which causes them pain, and makes them shrink with horror from the very shadow of sin. What the dulled eye, and the deadened sense of those who are plunged in the mire of a voluptuous, worldly life look upon as trifles unworthy of notice, they regard as evils to be avoided with the greatest

[1] St. Matt. xxiii.

care. In their estimation, nothing in the service of God is trifling, nothing contemptible; hence, they recoil from even the shadow of evil and from the slightest faults, just as a timid, sensitive man shrinks from the appearance of danger. Their only fear is lest they either may not do enough to satisfy their obligations, or may not do it in a way that is pleasing to God.

Dispositions such as these, instead of being laughed at and contemned, are worthy of the highest praise and commendation. It is of those animated with a like spirit that the Psalmist says: 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments.'[1] In another place, as if alleging the reason for so great exactitude and care in God's service, he addresses Him and says: 'Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept *most diligently*.'[2] The Apostle also seems to be of opinion that we can never be too exact in the service of so good a Master, and that our care to avoid giving Him any offence should be so great as to be what many would call *scrupulous*; for, writing to the Thessalonians, he says. 'From all *appearance* of evil refrain yourselves.'[3] Now, although the desire to comply with this injunction is very praiseworthy, and it is blessed by Him Who sees the most secret recesses of the heart, yet it is the cause of much anxiety to the holy souls that strive to accomplish it, and oftentimes it involves them in perplexities which trouble the calm of their hearts. It will, therefore, be of advantage to them to have some rules by which they will be able effectually to quiet their apprehensions, and safely to guide themselves through the fancied dangers which they see besetting their path to that perfection after which they are so earnestly striving.

When they find themselves troubled in conscience and perplexed as to which of two things it were best that they should perform, in order to give greater honour and glory to God, let them, when it is of little consequence to which side their preference is given, determine to do that which,

[1] Ps. cx. 1. [2] Ps. cxviii. 4. [3] 1 Thess. v. 22.

at first glance, seems good to them. For, of what use is it to consider with painful anxiety whether we shall dine with a friend or not; whether it were best that we should dress in black or in gray; whether we should fast on Monday or on Tuesday; whether we should take recreation or should abstain from it? One of these things is just of as little consequence as the other; and therefore, no importance should be attached to the performance of the one more than to the performance of the other. Hence, all protracted deliberation about these matters is nothing more than a waste of precious time, during which many a good work might be performed. Common-sense will tell us, or at least it ought to tell us, not to trouble about them, just as no one thinks of weighing in the balance every coin which passes through his hands, but only those which are of great value. Instead of suffering these scruples to disturb our peace, we should good-humouredly set them aside, and look upon the entertainment of them as a sort of superstition which ought to be killed outright. Therefore, when anyone finds himself haggling with his conscience as to whether it would be better to hear Mass in this church or in that, to give alms to a man or to a woman, to visit the sick or to go to Benediction, to say the Rosary or to recite Our Lady's Office, let him say to himself: 'To act in this way is foolish, and I may aptly compare myself to the ass, which stood irresolute between two bundles of hay, and perished of hunger.' We need never deliberate about such matters. They are not worth the time expended in thinking upon them.

But when we have to consider such things as the choice of a state of life, or an affair of consequence, or anything which will entail great expense, these matters are well worthy of our most careful attention. Time spent in reflecting upon them is like money put out to interest; it is productive of much gain. Our Lord Himself bids us weigh well the expense of building a tower, or a house, lest after we have begun and we are unable to finish, we should become objects of derision to

our neighbours. The examination and the deliberation which we devote to these grave matters, must be humble. We must not imagine that we shall be able to discover by the subtlety of our minds, or by the clearness of our intellect, that which it would be best for us to do. God oftentimes blinds the eyes of the most worldly wise and makes them stumble in the dark, in order to punish their pride and presumption. Therefore, after an earnest prayer for light and a prudent consultation with those who are acknowledged to be wise in such matters, let us decide, once for all, and determine upon what we are going to do. Then, without hesitating, and without turning to the right hand or to the left, let us carry into effect what we consider to be best.[1]

If, after careful examination and consultation with prudent and learned men, the scruple still continues to harass us, and generates in our hearts a rational fear, we may act against the dictates of that fear, in all cases in which we can have only conjectural or probable certainty, and also in all matters which that certainty, how feeble soever it may be, does not prevent us from considering lawful. Thus, when a person begins to fear, after some grievous temptation, lest he may have yielded to its seduction, and says to himself: 'Perhaps I am not in the state of grace' he should not allow that scruple to hinder him from approaching the Sacraments which he is obliged to receive. Nevertheless, it happens at times that a scruple of this nature ought not to be despised, if what it urges us to do is useful. Such would be the case when what it advises us to perform is not obligatory, but is only of counsel, or of greater perfection. Anyone who should act against such a scruple would be guilty of a venial sin, unless either inadvertence or trouble of conscience excuse him from fault.

If anyone troubled with scruples such as those which we have just been considering, carries into effect that which, after serious examination, the scruple points out to be most useful, he will make more progress in perfection than others

[1] St. Francis de Sales, De l'Amour, L. iv. viii., c. xiv.

do who are altogether free from their goading sting. For, with St. Paul, he is frequently made to feel that though certain lines of action may be quite lawful for him, yet they are not, on that account, altogether expedient. Hence he has to deny himself, and to walk in yet higher ways. As for those who do all that they may, they easily slip into doing that which they may not.[1] For, as St. Gregory remarks: 'He falls into that which is unlawful, who does not sometimes cautiously refrain from that which is lawful.'[2]

As we are giving advice to the scrupulous, and as we are not laying down rules for the guidance of those who have to sit as judges and directors of the consciences of others, we say that, when a person finds himself in a state of perplexity between two opinions—the one probable and less sure, the other more probable and more sure—he ought to choose that which leans most to what is perfect. This is what all do whose only aim is to please God, the best of friends, the most liberal of masters, the most loving of fathers.

Lastly, the scrupulous will find great consolation in humble docility to the guidance of their Director, and in a serious wish to walk with unbounded confidence in God, in the rough and narrow ways of virtue. This consolation does not consist in the total banishment of all fear, but in the moderation of fear by holy hope; not in contempt of scruples, but in zeal for perfection; not in excessive dread of sin, but in the love of God's good pleasure. 'Let the scrupulous man,' says St. Augustine, 'fear not: only let him keep advancing. However, I do not mean to say that he ought to love his imperfection and to remain stationary, but that as far as in him lies he should continue to advance.'[3]

[1] Clemens Alex., Stromat., Lib. III. [2] Moral, Lib. V., c. viii.
[3] In Ps. cxxxviii. 16.

# CHAPTER XIII.

## *AFFECTIVE PRAYER.*

AFTER the prayer of meditation, the utility of which for beginners cannot be over-estimated, inasmuch as it instructs them in their duties and furnishes them with the most powerful motives for abandoning sin and for walking in the ways of God, there follows another mode of prayer which in its turn serves admirably well for all the requirements of those who have made progress in the spiritual life. This is called affective prayer. It may be defined as 'that state of prayer in which the soul tends to God and to virtue by various acts of the will.'[1] By some writers, this is called 'the prayer of forced acts and affections of the will'. They so term it in order to make a distinction between an *act* and an *affection* of the will. An act is made by the superior will only, without any concurrence of sensitive nature—as when a man either humbles or curbs himself, so as to be resigned when there falls upon him some calamity which pierces his inmost heart with sorrow. Such acts as these when elicited, do not generate any sensation of pleasure in our inferior nature. But on the other hand, affections of the will, such as love, joy, hope, and desire, being the outcome partly of the will and partly of our senses, give rise to a certain amount of pleasure, and, in the beginning, spring almost exclusively from sensitive nature; but by degrees they become more and more pure, till at last, they are elicited almost entirely by the superior will.[2] They are called *forced* acts of the will, because in the earlier stages of this prayer, some degree of force on the part of the will

[1] Courbon, Mental Prayer.

[2] Fr. Baker, O. S. B., Sancta Sophia, III. Treatise, Sect. III., c. i.

is requisite in order to produce them. Also, they are called forced acts to distinguish them from the prayer of aspiration; for, although both these kinds of prayer consist in acts of the will, yet the facility with which these acts are elicited in the prayer of aspiration is sufficient warrant for calling it by another name.

A little reflection will show us that affective prayer, or the prayer of forced acts of the will, is not a species of prayer totally different from the prayer of meditation. It is simply a higher, and, therefore, more excellent species of the same kind of prayer. We might say that it is the flower or the fruit of meditation, while meditation itself is the root whence the flower springs, or the branch on which the fruit is borne. Meditation must, of course, have preceded the prayer of forced acts, just as the root and the branch must have existed before the flower and the fruit. It must have stored the mind with knowledge and enriched the will with motives capable of exciting it to act. A natural consequence of this wealth of knowledge and of these powerful incentives to action, is that the operations of the reason and the imagination decrease in activity, while those of the will gradually increase. The reason of this is manifest ; for, when the understanding has been thoroughly enlightened and convinced of the great truths, it needs no lengthy process of reasoning to make these truths stand out in bold relief before the mental vision of the soul. A mere glance at them is sufficient to suggest a motive for carrying them into execution and for convincing the mind of their necessity or of their utility, and straightway the will breaks forth into acts which, in the prayer of meditation, are elicited only after a long and sometimes painful process of reasoning.

If, then, the sole end of meditation is to enlighten the mind with respect to our duties, in order that the will, by this means, may be moved to perform those duties and to pray for *grace* to help it to perform them; if, in fact, meditation would be nothing more than an intellectual exercise, unless it did this, and, therefore, would be pro-

fitless unto eternal life, we may conclude that the production of these acts and of these affections of the will is, in reality, the principal end or purpose of meditation; for by them we love God, we grieve for our offences against Him, and ask for grace to amend and faithfully to put in practice what by meditation we have impressed upon our mind. It stands to reason, therefore, that when the will, without the aid of meditation, is able to elicit these various acts—or at least is able to elicit them without that elaborate process of induction and of deduction of which we are forced to make use in the beginning—it stands to reason, we repeat, that it should apply itself, during the whole time of its mental prayer, to the making of these various acts, and that it should not tie itself down to those methods which have now become of no use to it. To expect anyone to do this, and to force upon him the observance of those forms of prayer with which he began his spiritual life, would be as irrational as to ask a man to use crutches when he has recovered the full use of his limbs, or to spell his way through the pages of a book when he is able to read them at a glance. Meditation is but a stepping-stone to affective prayer or to mental prayer properly so called; an instrument to attain an end; and when that end is attained, like every other instrument, it may be laid aside till it is required again.

Nevertheless, while earnestly recommending all to aspire to and to strain every nerve to attain to the practice of affective prayer, we deem it necessary to point out for what manner of men it is not suitable, as well as what manner of men it is calculated to advance rapidly in the ways of perfection.

In the first place, it must always be remembered that nothing can be in the will of man—that no motive can exist there, and that no act can be produced by it—unless the intellect has first been enlightened by learning and by thought. The will is like a blind man who needs the eyes of others to see for him and their tongues to tell him of the events occurring around him. He has no opinions about

them, no knowledge of them, except that which he receives through the information of others. It is evident, therefore, that those who are ignorant of spiritual things, and who have not been accustomed to reflect on the great and startling truths which faith unfolds to our view, will be quite unfit for the exercise of affective prayer. It is an instrument of which they know not the stops and a book the characters of which they are unable to decipher. But even if they be full of the knowledge of sacred things, and if they have deeply meditated upon them, yet unless their hearts be free from the tyranny of their passions, they will not be suited for this species of prayer. If they were to indulge in it, it would, at the best, be mere sentimentality, and it would not produce any lasting effect upon their lives. For them, the only rational course is to adhere to meditation, and, by means of it, to try to convince themselves of the necessity for conquering their corrupt nature. When this has been accomplished, the will will then be able to act to some purpose. It must first be made to see and to feel that the most important of concerns for it is the complete withdrawal of its love from the false goods which hold it captive and prevent it from flying up to, and from embracing, the only true, solid good.

Moreover, even though a man is well-instructed and familiar with all the truths of faith, yet, if his life is a life of distracting cares, if he has to mix very much with the world, and to enter the busy arena of its everyday life, an arena in which he meets with a thousand things to occupy his mind, to fill him with care, to try his temper, and to absorb all his attention, affective prayer is quite out of place for him. The uproar and the tumult of the world will ring in his ears and make them deaf to the gentle whisperings of the Holy Spirit; the images of its gay pageants, of its busy, shifting scenes, of its contests, and toils, and intrigues, will haunt his imagination; the language which it speaks and the music which it sings will dwell in the cells of his memory like the refrain of an enchanting song. All these things will pass in a confused, eddying whirl before his

imagination, blurring the image of holy things, and choking the thoughts of eternal truths, till he will throw up the attempt to pray as an impossibility. That which he needs is a something which will make the uproar and the tumult of the world to cease, a something which will bring a hush among its boisterous winds, and a calm upon its surging waters. God's voice cannot make itself heard till this is done; His image cannot mirror itself in the soul which is troubled like a storm-swept sea. Therefore, he must *meditate*. By means of meditation the great truths will imprint themselves upon his mind; they will wipe out distracting images; they will speak in tones so clear and shrill as to be heard above the clamour of the world's babel. Then by degrees the will will be stirred up to life and action; and when it has thus been thoroughly awaked, it will begin to pray. No other course, we think, is left open to those who are thrown into the midst of the world's noisy, bustling crowd.

For whom, then, is affective prayer or the prayer of forced acts of the will, suitable? Who ought to give themselves up to the exercise of it, in preference to the prayer of meditation? The qualifications necessary for the successful pursuance of affective prayer are, in the first place, to be free from all grievous sin and from the habit of venial sin; for, the soul of one who has been the slave of his passions is like a hearth upon which the fire has become totally extinct. It is black, cold and cumbered with the ashes and cinders of burnt-out sensuality. The attempt once again to kindle there the fire of God's love is futile, unless the rubbish which sin has left behind is first removed, and fresh fuel is laid down by means of penance and of careful *thought* upon subjects which beget in the heart a salutary fear of God. It is impossible in any other way to light up the fire of divine love in the soul; for, unless the opposing and clogging obstacles be first raked out, the flame of God's love, after struggling in vain to pierce through them will die out, and leave the soul cold, cheerless, and lifeless as

before. Therefore, the first requisite for affective prayer is freedom from mortal sin.

This freedom, be it observed, is not that which a newly-converted soul acquires in the tribunal of penance, where the deed of its bondage is cancelled, and the fetters are stricken from its limbs; but that immunity from sin itself and from its consequences, which is the result of a complete enfranchisement from the degrading effects of this vilest of slavery. Such a condition as this is not won in a day. It is the outcome of long years passed in the exercise of liberty and in the enjoyment of all its privileges and blessings.

Besides freedom from the evil of grievous sin and the degrading habits accompanying it, the mind must be thoroughly well informed about all the great truths of our holy religion, and convinced of the utility of and the necessity for adhering to God, as the only object worthy of the love of a rational creature. Furthermore, the occupations which fill up the everyday life of a man who is thus well-instructed and free from the taint and the consequences of sin, must not be of a distracting nature, or so engrossing as to absorb all the energies of the soul and tax them to the utmost of their strength. Anyone who can say that he has these qualifications may, with the advice of a prudent Director, safely apply himself to the practice of affective prayer. Hence, we think that all Religious should aim at this prayer as the one best adapted for advancing them in the way of perfection. Also, persons leading a devout life in the world, who do not mix much in society, and who are not encumbered with the care of a large family, may make it the support and the consolation of their spiritual life. Also, it may be strongly recommended to priests who have not the charge of large Missions, who live in the country, and who do not mix much with men, and who, consequently, have leisure time upon their hands to devote to study or to pursuits which of their own nature, lead to contemplation or to quiet affective prayer. As for priests whose lot is cast in

great cities, where there is a constant drain upon their energies, where they are called upon to visit the sick, to instruct the ignorant, to assist at school-boards, and to administer a large parish, their only chance of preserving a religious spirit and a spirit of recollection is very diligently and very earnestly to apply themselves to meditation.

Nevertheless, by prolonging this most admirable religious exercise for a whole hour, as the Fathers of the Society of Jesus do, even they whose lot is cast in the most active sphere of life will reap most of the advantages of affective prayer, by devoting at least half that time to the affections which their thoughts may suggest, rather than to the refinements and to the elaborate deductions of their reason.

When the Holy Spirit calls anyone from the inferior state of meditation to the loftier regions of affective prayer, He sends with His message certain unmistakable signs which indicate to the soul that it is time to quit a method of prayer which has ceased to be of much use to it. Meditation, which heretofore was its delight and a very well-spring of spiritual consolation, dries up and its waters cease to flow. There is no refreshment to be drawn thence any more. Every effort to dig deeper, and once again to reach the sparkling waters, is of no avail. Only rock and arid sand, without any moisture to give even a faint hope of success, reward their laborious efforts. The futile attempts of the reason and the imagination to influence and to inflame the will are productive of naught but disappointment and disgust. Yet the soul feels that, if left to itself, the will would spontaneously give forth those affections and produce those acts which it has been taught must of necessity be engendered by the combined action of the intelligence and the will. Still it persists in its old habit of reasoning and of reflection, thinking, perhaps, that its inability to derive any advantage from these processes is simply the result of some bodily indisposition which clogs the operation of the soul, or that it is attributable to some trial of spiritual aridity sent by God to prove its fidelity and to test whether it is serving

Him for His own sake, or only for the delight which it finds in His gifts. But the permanence of this inability forbids it to think that either indisposition or a trial sent from God will satisfactorily account for the loss of power on the part of meditation to influence the will.

Together with this pitiable impotence of will, the soul is conscious of an inward impulse, urging it to try some other method of prayer which will enable it to elicit those acts, for the producing of which meditation has lost its spell; but knowing full well, the great advantage and the priceless worth of meditation which it has used so long and with results so excellent, and at the same time being ignorant of any other method which has so much to recommend it, the soul instinctively shrinks from giving it up, just as a traveller hesitates, and fears when he is forced to leave the beaten track, and tread in a strange way leading he knows not whither. Nevertheless, though full of uncertainty about the new method and of disgust for the old, because of its unprofitableness and difficulty, the soul, urged and guided by God, at last ventures upon the new way; it gives vent to its pent-up love and affection, and breaks forth into acts of the will, adoring, loving, and praising God, and humbling itself before the Lord Whom it wishes to serve with all the power of its being. At once another world is opened out before its admiring gaze. It finds itself in the fresh, invigorating atmosphere of a new country, in which, instead of painfully toiling along the earth, it is able to speed onwards with the fleetness of the antelope—nay, to soar and fly upwards, like the imperial eagle gazing steadfastly upon the sun.

By tokens such as we have been describing, a soul may perceive that the time has come for it to advance into the higher way of affective prayer. But, though it may feel convinced that these signs are sent by God, nevertheless, it ought not to leave the way of meditation without consulting its spiritual Director and following his counsels; for, otherwise it will be exposed to the danger of quitting the lower level too soon, a proceeding which is as great a mistake as

either remaining on it too long, or not leaving it at all, even when the great Master says: 'Friend, go up higher.'

Having pointed out the marks by which a soul may see when God is calling it into loftier paths and to a closer union with Himself, we will now say a few words about the manner in which this species of prayer ought to be exercised. A suitable preparation is as necessary for affective prayer as it is for meditation. But this need not now be so exact and minute in detail, as is that which is requisite for meditation; because we must take it for granted that the soul which is fit to practise affective prayer, is already filled with the knowledge of spiritual things and well stored with subjects for prayer. Still some sort of preparation is necessary, such as selecting the subject and running over its various circumstances, so as to bring them all before the intelligence. Also, in the beginning of this prayer, use may be made of the same introduction that is employed in the prayer of meditation, to settle the mind and to quiet the imagination. This, however, need not be so long, nor need it embrace so many points and preludes. Then the soul should give itself up to eliciting acts of affection, love, contrition, admiration, humility, and the like, according as the subject chosen shall suggest. As an example is always easier to understand, and as it strikes us more forcibly than formal precepts do, we will here lay before the reader, from the works of Cardinal Bona, a page which will give him an idea of the way in which he may exercise himself in affective prayer.

### *EXAMPLE OF AFFECTIVE PRAYER.*

LET us suppose, then, that one who has made considerable progress in spiritual ways, has given up sin, and persevered for years in his renunciation, is now invited by God to devote himself to affective prayer, and that with the advice of a prudent Director he actually does so. In order to incite himself to a still greater horror of sin, he puts before himself a lively image of that which he has

been, and looking upon himself as a prodigal who returns to his father, and taking that most touching parable of the Gospel as the subject of his prayer, he thus begins:

I. 'My God, Thou art here present before me. I adore Thee from the abyss of my nothingness. I am heartily sorry for all the offences which I have committed against Thee. I am like the foolish young man of whom Thou didst speak in the Gospel. Suffer me to kneel before Thee, and do Thou help me in my prayer, that it may be fruitful to my soul, and that it may aid me faithfully to persevere in the way of Thy Commandments.

'O Lord, my God, I am a most wretched sinner, unworthy to tread the earth. Have mercy on me and save me. O Lord, Who art my Supreme Good! how far have I departed from Thee? and do now dwell in this most distant land of misery, where I have ruined myself. O most loving Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee; truly I am not worthy to be called Thy son; make me, I beseech Thee, as one of Thy hired servants. O my most sweet God! how it grieves me to have sinned! How sorry I am that I have transgressed Thy Law! Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. O Lord, my God, I detest my sins; I abominate all my crimes; I confess my ingratitude; and I take refuge before the altar of Thy mercy. Wash me, O Christ Jesus! in Thy precious blood, and purify me from every sin. O Lord! heal my soul, wounded by sin; anoint the scars of my sins with the oil of Thy grace; and do not, I beseech Thee, despise me! O most loving Lord God! from this time forth I will never transgress Thy Law; I wish never more to consent to any sin; I prefer to incur every pain, every infamy, yea, even death itself, rather than sin anew. O most loving Father! grant me grace to bring forth worthy fruits of penance, and to chastise my offences by suitable punishment. I have gone astray as a sheep that is lost; yet I hear Thy most sweet voice saying: "Thou hast gone astray after many lovers; nevertheless return to Me, and I will receive thee."

II. 'Now I have begun, O Lord! now I begin to live, not in my own strength, or in the might of my arm, but in the multitude of Thy mercies; do Thou strengthen the work which Thou hast wrought in me. Thou, O Lord! hast given to me righteous sentiments and a docile heart; but, unhappy man that I am! I have abused all Thy good gifts! But Thou, O merciful Father! hast recalled me from my sins and freed me from the pains of hell. I am exceedingly sorry and I grieve for the countless sins by which I have offended my most kind Redeemer, have made myself the slave of the devil and provoked Thy indignation. O most loving Father! would that I had never transgressed Thy precepts! Would that I had never fallen into so great a misery, into so dire a calamity! Would that I had never sinned! Happy they who have never lost their innocence, who have kept unstained the grace of their baptism! O God of all things! I resolve not to sin again. I most firmly purpose not to transgress Thy most holy precepts; by the assistance of Thy grace I determine truly and from the bottom of my heart, to fulfil the whole Law. Look upon me, O Lord! with the eyes of Thy mercy; blot out my past sins; grant me, through Thine infinite goodness, the grace to amend. How great hitherto has been my indolence! I have lost the time granted to me for penance; I have rejected Thy grace; I have been deaf to the words wherewith Thou didst call me; and now, O Lord! what shall I do? I am sorry for having sinned; have pity on me! Alas! O Lord God! how grievous are my wounds, how great my weakness and perversity, for the healing whereof Thou wast crucified and put to death. O God, be merciful to me a sinner! Jesus, Son of the living God, have pity on me! O Sovereign Ruler of my life, Thou seest that there is naught of good or of health of soul in me; I am wretched and blind; I can do nothing, without Thee.

III. 'O most loving Saviour, Thou knowest how many evils I have done, and how much good I have omitted to do; be gracious to me and save me! O glorious house of

God! how mean didst thou appear to me, and how shamefully, for a mere nothing, have I despised thee! O most just Judge! with how much reason mightest Thou have thrust me into hell; and yet Thou hast mercifully spared me. I confess, O Lord! that I am the most wicked of men; nevertheless, I put my trust in Thy boundless goodness. If my sins are beyond measure, there is also no limit to Thy mercy. O God! Thou knowest my foolishness, and my offences are not hidden from Thee. The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember! O God of mercy! I beseech Thee, through Thy beloved Son, make me embrace virtue, reject vice, trample upon earthly things, thirst after those of heaven. Woe to that time in which I knew Thee not, Thou Supreme good of my soul! Woe to my blindness when I saw Thee not! O Lord, my God! when shall I completely die unto myself, and live only unto Thee? When shall I rid myself of all earthly things? When shall I entirely restrain my senses and my affections, and put a bridle upon whatever is vicious in me? Oh that I could now despise the world, trample upon all earthly things, and regard as naught whatever is held in high esteem by the world. Would that I were purged of all vice, and, being cleansed from disorderly affections, were worthy to receive the Divine Spirit, and to partake of His heavenly favours!'[1]

The preceding example will give a sufficiently clear idea of the manner in which the soul exercises itself in this higher kind of prayer, in which affections of love, joy, sorrow, and desire, together with acts of the will expressing humility, self-contempt, complete resignation to the will of God, and the like, take the place of the considerations and the reasonings of the prayer of meditation. He who is moved by the impulse of the Holy Spirit to exercise his soul in these acts, need not elicit a series of them, such as we have given in the extract made from the treatise of the devout and learned Cardinal Bona. Any one of the acts therein contained would suffice for a whole hour of

[1] Cardinal Bona, Via Compend. ad Deum., c. xi.

prayer. If the soul is able to persevere in eliciting one such act, and if it finds in that act ample food for its affections, let it continue to make use of that act; let it never pass on to the formation of a new one till the force of that with which it began its prayer is exhausted, and until it is no longer serviceable to kindle the flames of divine love in the heart, or to excite the ardour of the will.

The advantages to be reaped from such prayer as this are manifold, and a brief summary of the chief among them will serve to show how earnestly all spiritual men ought to strive by means of this method, to unite themselves while here below to God their last end. In the first place, it wonderfully increases in us the love of God. Meditation does nothing more for us than prepare the fuel of divine love. It helps us to clear out from our hearts whatever prevents that fuel from being ignited. But this done, it is the acts of the will, aided by God's grace, that apply the match and kindle into a flaming fire the material prepared by meditation. Now, the repetition of these acts engenders a facility in their production, and the exercise of the will-power augments the will's force, just as bodily exercise develops and strengthens the thews and sinews of the human frame. Hence, by this species of prayer, the will is enabled, in course of time, to throw into its acts an intensity and an ardour which are rarely to be met with in the prayer of those who give themselves up exclusively to meditation. The consequence is, that by these affections and loving aspirations, and by the production of innumerable acts of love, they unite themselves more closely to God. At one time they break forth into what are called acts of the love of preference, by which they proclaim the utter hollowness and worthlessness of all things when compared with God. At another, filled with the knowledge of God's greatness, goodness, power, justice, immensity, infinity, and incomprehensibility, they express, by an act of the love of complacence, the rapture of their souls, that He is what He is. Then they break forth into acts of the love of benevolence, by which, though fully aware that God

cannot be greater, or more perfect, or richer than He is, they nevertheless desire that, if it were possible for Him to be still more magnificently infinite in all perfections than He actually is, He might be so. They desire and pray that all men may know and may intensely love Him; and supposing that He did not possess all that He has, they wish that He might possess it.

Love, of its own nature, leads to union of wills; for, a lover cannot but desire and wish for what is pleasing to his beloved. Affective prayer, therefore, by the fact of augmenting and of intensifying the soul's love of God, causes it to conform itself in all things with His most holy will. It abandons itself to the guidance of God, and it expresses its willingness to follow whithersoever He may lead, by such acts as: 'Thy will be done.' It does this, not in words only, but aided by Him into Whose hands it has cast itself, it is able to accomplish that will in deeds also. Its first thought always is: 'What does God wish me to do?' It thrusts self-interest aside, and it does not allow it to plead one word in defence of its claims. 'Has God willed me to do this? Then let all that can be said in behalf of anything else be left unsaid. It shall not have any weight with me.' With sound, practical common-sense, it looks for the will of God neither in what may seem good to its own views, nor in what may happen to agree with its own humour, but in the commands of God, of His Church, and of those Superiors to whom Christ has said: 'He that heareth you, heareth Me.' A natural effect of such love of God is a great zeal for the advancement of His glory, manifesting itself in ardent desires that all creatures may adore, praise, and magnify Him, and in works undertaken for the honour of His name and executed with the sole view of procuring for Him that glory which is His due.

Moreover, as all love tends to union between those who love, the soul which, in affective prayer, is animated by God's holy love, desires with vehement longing to be united to Him. However, as this union cannot be fully effected in this life, but only by that actual union with

God in the Holy Eucharist in which the soul is united to Him, truly, indeed, but yet under the veils of the sacramental species, a ceaseless longing for Holy Communion enters the soul, and makes it hunger after this bread of Angels with the eagerness of those who are famishing through want of bodily sustenance. Union with Christ, accompanied by this burning love, begets a wish to be like Him both in soul and in body. Hence arise a love of suffering and a readiness to accept that which either is sent by God, or is occasioned by the malice of the devil; and when suffering such as this is not forthcoming, the soul seeks of its own accord, by voluntary internal and external mortifications, to share in that chalice of suffering of which Our Lord drank so deeply.

Furthermore, the practice of affective prayer begets in the soul a desire of solitude, that it may have more leisure to give to its Beloved, and more quiet to listen to the low, soft accents of His gentle voice. It engenders a thirst for a deeper and more accurate knowledge of God, and so fills the heart with Him and with His infinite perfections that the mouth never wearies of speaking of Him, nor does the ear of listening with rapt attention to those who speak of Him. It fires the heart with undaunted courage in meeting the difficulties, in surmounting the obstacles which stand in the way of its perfection and of that close union with its God which it so earnestly desires to maintain unbroken. It occupies itself wholly with Him, so that it languishes with love and desires to be dissolved and to be for ever with Him. Lastly, deeming Christ to be all in all—to be the only object really worthy of love—it works with all its might to bring others to His love and to save the souls for which He poured forth His precious blood. It contemns all things else. The world to it is as a faded flower; its wealth as so much dross; its pleasure as 'flat, stale, and unprofitable as a twice-told tale.'[1]

[1] For the effects of this species of prayer, see Courbon's Mental Prayer.

## CHAPTER XIV.

*ORDINARY CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER.*

It depends altogether upon the soul's correspondence with the graces received in affective prayer and upon the good pleasure of God, whether it will ever be advanced by Him to the most perfect form of prayer that is compatible with our state here below—that is to say, to the prayer of contemplation. This differs in no respect from the prayer of meditation, or from the prayer of forced acts of the will, except in its greater degree of perfection and in the greater facility perceptible in the operations of the soul that is called to the exercise of it. It is defined to be 'an uplifting of the soul to God by a simple intuition, full of affection.' From these words we see, in the first place, that contemplation is, like all other prayer, 'an uplifting of the mind and of the heart to God.' In the next place, that it differs from meditation only inasmuch as it is made without reasoning, without the use of sensible images, and indeed, without any *perceptible* use of the internal senses, by a pure, simple, quiet operation of the mind, which we choose to call an *intuition*. Lastly, it differs from the prayer of forced acts of the will or affective prayer, in that it is made without any effort, and, as it were, spontaneously.

It is obvious, therefore, that contemplation is the perfection of mental prayer. Meditation and the exercise of the affections of the heart and of the acts of the will, are but means employed to gain an end. The end is contemplation, which follows upon these acts just as either the home to which we are travelling succeeds to our journey, or repose to labour. Nevertheless, that end is not always perfectly

attained in this life; but the germs of it are, so to speak, implanted in us, and they will grow and expand into the plentitude of perfection when the sun of eternal justice shall shine upon them in our bright, happy home beyond the grave. In the meantime we must strive to the utmost of our ability to perfect the gift of prayer which it has pleased Our heavenly Father to bestow upon us. Aided by His all powerful grace, we shall, perhaps, advance from the prayer of meditation to that of affection, and from the prayer of affection we shall be uplifted into that happy condition in which we cease to read and to learn of God, as a blind man reads and learns by slowly tracing out with his fingers the raised characters of his book, but we shall look upon Him as we look upon the printed pages whereon a softened light is falling, and, at a single glance of the eye, take in what we were able to grasp only after long and dubious searching. Then we shall drink of the full stream of His riches and graces and love. We shall no longer be compelled to draw them in scanty draughts and with much labour, as from a deep well, by means of our own laborious cogitations.

A species of prayer, such as that which we have been endeavouring to put before the reader, is no chimera, no sickly phantom of a disordered brain. It is a reality. It is a gift bestowed by God upon His chosen servants, and for the existence of it we have the authority of the Sacred Scriptures, as well as that of the Fathers of the Church, who are the acknowledged exponents of the Sacred Text: 'Taste and see,' says the royal Psalmist, 'how sweet the Lord is;[1] and Our Lord Himself said: 'Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.'[2] From these words we may conclude that when the soul has been thoroughly purified from sin, when it has been exercised long and earnestly in the Law of God, and when it has striven with all its might to keep close to Him by an intimate union of will, it comes at last to have an experimental knowledge of His gracious sweetness and to see His attributes in a way which, while

[1] Ps. xxxiii. 9. [2] St. Matt. v. 8.

it is compatible with its state of exile, is, nevertheless, more clear than any insight acquired, while journeying onwards on the lower levels of the spiritual life. Hence, the strong terms—*seeing* and *feeling*—are now applied, and are justly applied to the soul's intercourse with its Maker. 'For, not with the bodily organs only is man said to see. He has other means of vision far more keen and penetrating. The eye of his flesh, it is true, is able to scan the world and the things of the world; but the eye of his reason searches into his own soul and into its most secret thoughts and motions; while the eye of contemplation, ranging over a still wider field of vision, feasts itself not only upon what is in him and below him, but upon God Himself, Who is raised to such an infinite height above him.'[1] He looks upon God, and upon the things of God, not, indeed, as he will look upon Him when death shall have drawn aside the veil now hiding Him from our eyes, but by that uplifting of his whole soul to Him, without force of reasoning, by a most loving and affectionate regard, whereby, through faith and love, a soul may adhere to revealed truths which excite in it the most intense ardour of divine love. That we are able, in this fashion, to see and to contemplate truth, without the aid of reasoning, but by a simple intuition is evident from the way in which our intelligence is able to seize upon the axioms of science and of philosophy as soon as they are presented to it. It goes through no process of reasoning. It sees at once, and gives its assent. It needs no method of induction, no proof, no reasoning, to see at a glance that the whole, for instance, is greater than its part; or that in all created things an effect cannot exist without a cause. Now, if this is true of natural things, there is no reason why it should not be true also, in the case of revealed truths, which the soul is able intuitively to apprehend and assent to by means of the light of faith and by the aid of God's all-powerful grace.

At first sight, this way of apprehending and of contemplating the truths of God seems to be altogether unsuitable

[1] Hugh of St. Victor, In Cœlest. Hier., Lib. iii., p. 976.

to man's present condition. He is rational, and therefore, he must, acquire his knowledge by means of reason. He must examine, compare, form judgments, and draw conclusions. As for simple intuition, of which we have been speaking in the prayer of contemplation, that belongs to the Angels of God, and to the Deity. But, though this be true to a certain extent, a little reflection will, nevertheless, show us, that although the method of reasoning is generally attributed to man as the only means by which he attains to knowledge, yet it is not really the *only* channel through which knowledge is conveyed to his intelligence. It has come to be looked upon as the *only* medium, from the fact that God never needs it; that the Angels seldom require its assistance; and consequently, that as man is neither a god nor yet even an angelic spirit, but an intelligence imprisoned, as it were, in a body of flesh, the only means by which light can reach him is through his faculty of reason which catches whatever light streams in through the apertures in the walls of his prison-house. True it is that this is the ordinary way by which he gains his knowledge, and, being the ordinary way, it is oftenest used by him. Nevertheless, it is not the *only* way, as we have before remarked. In proof of this we have but to cite the fact that by simple intuition, and without going through any process of reasoning he can know first principles and revealed truths. This being admitted, we must also admit that the way of intuition may come at last to be the ordinary way by which the soul looks upon the truths of faith, and by which it is excited by that simple glance to intense acts of divine love.

This conclusion, however, will not be allowed to pass unchallenged. Many are sure to exclaim: 'Do you mean to tell us that men are able, without the use of their reasoning faculties, to contemplate God and the truths of faith? Why, the very act of contemplation is built up out of reasoning. It rests upon reasoning as a structure rests upon its foundations.' To these our answer must be that the act of contemplation and the act of reasoning are incompatible

the one with the other; they mutually exclude each other. For, the using of the reasoning faculties implies that the mind is working *towards* the attainment of knowledge; whereas the act of contemplation is one of rest in the enjoyment of knowledge already attained. Therefore, to hold that the act of contemplation consists in the use of the reasoning faculties, is the same as to maintain that an athlete, who is actually running in the race, has at the same time that he is careering through the arena attained the goal, or that he is running and resting at the same time.

That contemplation stands upon reason, as a building stands upon its foundations, nobody will deny; for, reason is a preparatory means to contemplation; it precedes contemplation, just as the planted grain is before the corn which springs from it. Therefore, in answer to all such objections we reply: 'Contemplation excludes reasoning only from the act by which the soul contemplates or looks upon and takes pleasure in God, or in revealed truths, it does not exclude it as a means to gain an end; for, as we have already remarked, reason goes before contemplation as a preparatory means, and as an ordinary disposition which makes the soul able to apprehend and to rest in the truths which it contemplates.'

But if, persisting in their objection, they go on to say that this pure intuition by which the soul apprehends and rests in truths, is inadequate, without the aid of reasoning, to produce certitude, and if in proof of this they assert that also the light of nature, which suffices for the apprehension of first principles and axioms, is insufficient to produce certitude, especially as the soul has not the light of glory to assist it, but only the light of faith which, of necessity, is always somewhat obscure, we reply: 'Reason is not the only instrument capable of giving certitude to our minds. There is a special supernatural light accompanying contemplation, and rendering the soul perfectly certain of the truths in which it rests with undisturbed tranquillity. For, if the light of faith, although obscure, is yet sufficiently

powerful to enable the soul to see and to adhere with full certainty to a revealed truth, why should not that same light, intensified by the dazzling splendour of the gifts of understanding, wisdom and knowledge imparted by the Holy Ghost be amply sufficient to enable it to have absolute certitude about a thing which it knows by simple intuition? There is no reason whatever why it should not.'

Therefore, after having met and answered the chief objections usually urged against the reality of that contemplation which we called 'an uplifting of the soul to God by a simple and very affective intuition,' we may now add that this intuition does not go beyond the ordinary laws of Divine Providence, in the supernatural order. Hence, we have called that contemplation of which we are speaking, *ordinary contemplation*. There is a certain sense in which we may say that it is *acquired* by devout and spiritual men, and it is this: by their own efforts they may *prepare* their souls for the exercise of it and finally obtain it, but not by the force of nature only, or as something due to them. Furthermore, they cannot merit it without a new grace; and, rigorously speaking, they never merit it at all. Also, we may say of it, that it is *active*, at least in the understanding of the acts which dispose the soul for it. In this sense it may be regarded even as the fruit of our own labour, if we are careful to remember that this labour is performed by the strength of grace more than by the aid of our own natural powers. Nevertheless, in spite of these admissions, we cannot, rigorously speaking, call ordinary contemplation *natural*, unless as compared with extraordinary contemplation which is of a higher supernatural order. Even ordinary contemplation is essentially supernatural and infused into the soul by God. St. Thomas, proving that this contemplation is accessible to all, says: 'Meditation is made by the aid of human or theological reasoning, and therefore its method of procedure is human. Contemplation, on the contrary, proceeds from the gifts of understanding, wisdom, and knowledge, which make its method of procedure

superhuman. But as faith and the gifts of understanding, wisdom, and knowledge are given to all men as means of spiritual advancement, in accordance with the ordinary laws of Divine Providence, it follows not only that meditation, but also that contemplation, is accessible to all, according to the ordinary laws of Divine Providence.[1] Therefore, ordinary contemplation is supernatural and infused.

But this conclusion is not suffered to pass uncontested; for, there are some writers who deny the presence of any intrinsic, supernatural agency at all in ordinary contemplation, and maintain that it is sufficient that it should be extrinsically supernatural. This opinion, however, is untenable, and for this reason: ordinary contemplation is meritorious, because oftentimes it is an act of faith and of charity, and is that perfect natural beatitude to which we may attain in this life. Consequently, it must be performed by the aid of divine grace; for, no merely natural act which a man is able to perform without such assistance is meritorious. To maintain that it is, would be to fall into the Pelagian heresy, which denies the necessity for divine grace in order to acquire merit. Therefore, ordinary contemplation which is meritorious and helpful unto men for the gaining of everlasting life, must be intrinsically supernatural.

But the adversaries of this view will insist and say: 'If ordinary contemplation is intrinsically supernatural and infused by the Holy Ghost, what do the great Doctors and the Saints of the Church mean when they advise men to aim at contemplation, and exhort them to stir up all their strength to win it, to apply themselves to it by ceasing to make use of reasoning in their prayer, to obtain it by personal efforts, and other phrases of the like import? What else can they mean but that contemplation is a beatitude acquired by oft-repeated acts, and that it depends upon our own will? Consequently, it is acquired; it is not infused; it is intrinsically natural, and supernatural only in an extrinsic manner.'

[1] St. Thomas, In. 3, d. 34, p. 1, a. 1.

In this conclusion we cannot, by any means, acquiesce. For, the words of the Saints and the Doctors of the Church cannot be accepted in any other sense than that the soul by the aid of grace may dispose itself for contemplation, and may acquire it by its good dispositions. Nevertheless, if it really does attain to contemplation, it can be only by the aid of a new grace.

Another circumstance, which not unfrequently shakes the faith of men concerning ordinary contemplation, and makes them look upon it as an unsafe method of prayer, is the apparent absence of any principles upon which it may be built up. The habit of faith is not one of these; for, it is nothing more than a preparation for the common acts of discursive prayer or meditation; nor is theological science, which is natural and elaborated by reason; nor is it to be found in the gift of understanding which apparently belongs to extraordinary contemplation; nor yet in the gifts of science and of wisdom which spring from reason. Therefore, if a solid foundation for it can be discovered in none of these, it looks, to say the least, as if men were deceiving themselves when they speak of contemplation as a reality, which may be used to draw the soul into a daily closer union with its last end, and to give it a foretaste of that ecstatic joy which will be its reward, when faith shall be swallowed up in vision. This argument against ordinary contemplative prayer has, on the face of it, great apparent strength. But, in spite of its formidable appearance, it has not sufficient weight to strike a telling blow.

It is fallacious; and the fallacy of it consists in asserting that neither this nor that can be regarded as a principle whereon to build contemplative prayer. For, it may be quite true that faith taken by itself is not one of its principles, or theological science independently of faith, nor are the gifts of understanding, of science, and of wisdom, irrespective of faith and theology. Nevertheless, though none of these taken singly may be a principle of contemplative prayer, yet when either all or most of them, are found united in any person, it is only rational to infer that

they may have an influence upon him as principles which *prepare and dispose him* to contemplative prayer.

Can it be denied that faith will have such an influence as this, especially since contemplation itself is an act of faith, the obscurity of which is suddenly enlightened by a gift from on high? Does not theological science, when elevated by faith and illuminated by God's gifts, aid the soul to contemplate, at least by preparing and disposing it for that heavenly favour? Also, the gift of intelligence may be looked upon as one of the dispositions requisite for contemplation; for, the will can neither love nor adhere to what is unknown to it. Finally, the spiritual wisdom and science, poured into the soul by the Holy Spirit of God, enable it to reach the consequences of the primary or first truths, and of the loftiest principles, not by close, patient reasoning, which crawls slowly along from premiss to conclusion through a chain of syllogistic propositions, but by a simple intuition or glance which, quick as a lightning-flash, carries it to the knowledge which it desires, and wherein it reposes, calm and serene, in the enjoyment of the sublimest truths.

From what has been said thus far, we may gather that the distinguishing features of ordinary contemplative prayer are: the uplifting of the spirit above itself; its suspension or rest in the things which it contemplates; admiration at the wonders which fall beneath its ken; and entrancing spiritual sweetness wherewith the soul is inundated in the exercise of it.

## CHAPTER XV.

### *EXTRAORDINARY CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER.*

THE definition already given of ordinary contemplation, to wit, that it is 'an uplifting of the soul to God by a simple affective intuition,' will suffice also for extraordinary contemplative prayer, if we add that this prayer is a privilege beyond the common laws of God's providence in the supernatural order. These words give to extraordinary contemplation the distinguishing mark which makes it stand out clear and well defined from ordinary contemplative prayer. Not only does it embrace in itself all those other modes of prayer which are of a more sublime and special nature, such as the prayer of quiet and the prayer of silence, but it is accompanied by ecstasies and raptures during which under extraordinary forms truths are revealed to the highly favoured soul.

Moreover, in order to communicate with the soul, Almighty God makes use, in this state of prayer, of revelations, interior conversations and various other means, for which no rule can be assigned except His own divine will which teaches men that which it pleases, and in the way in which it pleases Him. Also, there are attributed to extraordinary contemplation, various qualities which serve still more clearly to distinguish it from every other species of prayer. It is said to be *infused* into the soul, without, however, thereby implying that ordinary contemplative prayer is not imparted in the same way; for, as we have already learnt in the preceding chapter, no one by his own unaided personal exertions is able to attain unto even ordinary contemplative prayer. Furthermore, it is called *passive*, because whoever is chosen by God for

this great favour cannot obtain it by any power of his own, but he is in the hands of the great Master as a piece of clay is in the hands of a modeller, and he receives from Him whatever shape or whatever impression He chooses to impart. Also, this extraordinary state of prayer is described as the product of divine grace. So also is the state of ordinary contemplative prayer; but that which marks off the one from the other, is the fact that extraordinary contemplative prayer is always accompanied by one or more of those graces which are designated by the name 'gratuitously given,' such as prophecy, the gift of miracles, etc., while ordinary contemplation is only a more sublime state of affective prayer. Lastly, extraordinary contemplation is said to be *supernatural;* but this attribute is assigned to it, not in order to indicate that ordinary contemplation is not supernatural, but only by way of comparison, to show that, though this latter is supernatural as well as the former, yet it is of a less elevated supernatural order than extraordinary contemplation.

If there are some men who question the very existence of ordinary contemplation, with still greater reason may we expect that there will not be wanting cavillers who will endeavour to throw ridicule upon any proposition which attempts to establish the existence of *extraordinary* contemplation. In spite of this, however, we must first of all prove that what they scorn as the fanciful product of an overheated imagination, is as much a matter of fact as are the men whom they meet in the streets; and in the next place we will answer the objections which they bring forwards to support their own views.

Anyone who is conversant with the works of such writers as St. Laurence Justinian,[1] St. John of the Cross,[2] and St. Theresa, will find that they regard this species of prayer as constituting one of the stages in the spiritual life, and as having an existent reality of which they treat with the same confident conviction with which

[1] Tractatus, De Oratione. [2] De Ascens. in Mont. Carm., Lib. iii., Cap. 12

they would treat of the wiles and the temptations of the devil. All other ascetical writers, when treating of the raptures, the visions, the ecstasies and the like, which are usual accompaniments of this exalted prayer, accept its existence as a fact about which there is no controversy whatever. Richard of St. Victor, when speaking of the ecstatic transports which occur in extraordinary contemplative prayer, cites these words of the Canticles as a proof of the existence of these divine favours: 'Eat, O my friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved,' and considers that the spiritual inebriation here spoken of, signifies the favours about which he is treating.[1] Also the Prophet Joel confidently looked forwards to the abundance of spiritual gifts which should flow from the future Messiah. Among them he mentions those which usually accompany this species of prayer: 'It shall come to pass,' he says, 'after this, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.'[2] Admiration of the Divine Majesty, according to St. Bernard, is the supreme degree of contemplative prayer, in which these predictions of the prophet find their verification: 'If the heart is purified from all stain, that sublime prayer easily lifts it up to the loftiest things, and holds it for a time, as it were, suspended, gazing in rapture and in ecstasy upon the beauty which it is contemplating.'[3] To such a height as this, the seraphic St. Francis was raised by contemplative prayer, when Almighty God vouchsafed to him that wondrous vision, in which there were imprinted upon his hands, feet, and side the marks of Our Lord's Passion, so that he stands out for ever before us as one of the most brilliant examples of perfect contemplation. It is of such perfect contemplative prayer that St. Thomas speaks, when he says: 'There is a species of contemplation which is not given to all the Just. It is the fruit of wisdom, which is a grace altogether gratuitous;

[1] Richard of St. Victor, De Contemplat., Lib. iv., Cap. 16.
[2] Joel, Cap. ii. 28. [3] De Consid., Cap. ult.

and it perfects at the same time this precious gift. This grace is not necessary to obtain salvation, or to become perfect; the Holy Ghost distributes it as He pleases. It is nothing else than extraordinary contemplation, and it may proceed also from other graces gratuitously given.[1] Therefore, there exists a species of contemplative prayer which is extraordinary and which is accompanied by those supernatural favours reserved for those whom God is leading to eternal life, by a way high above the ordinary laws of His Divine Providence in the supernatural order.

This is the conclusion at which we must arrive, after a careful study of the great ascetical works which treat of this sublime species of prayer and of the lives of those Saints whom God has raised, by the practice of it, to a very high degree of sanctity.

Let us now turn our attention to the objections usually made by the adversaries of contemplative prayer. What are they? They are manifold and various; but, as the task of answering them all would be at once profitless and wearisome, we will confine ourselves to the consideration of only the chief among them.

First, it is maintained that those extraordinary favours said to be the distinguishing marks of this species of prayer, and designated by theologians, 'graces gratuitously given,' are not at all requisite for extraordinary contemplative prayer. The reason alleged is that they do not unite the soul to God, but that they are given chiefly for the edification and the salvation of others. We admit that they are not *absolutely* requisite for contemplative prayer; but, at the same time we maintain that they are indispensable for perfection, inasmuch as they presuppose the existence in the soul of other virtues and of other gifts. With respect to the reason offered in support of this objection, we may observe that, although the primary effect of all gratuitously given graces is not to unite the soul to God, yet they infuse fresh life into, and strengthen those graces which make men pleasing to God.

[1] St. Thomas, II., ii. q. 45, a. 5.

As a further proof that graces gratuitously given are not requisite for extraordinary contemplative prayer, the adversaries of it are careful to point out that such graces are not indicative of sanctity, but that they may be found in those who are even great sinners and most hostile to God. Thus, the High Priest Caiphas prophesied, though his heart was full of rancorous hatred and of malignant spite against Our Lord; also Saul, though hereafter to be reprobate, was found among the company of the prophets. It is, therefore, but rational to infer that, if such men as these were endowed with graces gratuitously given, those graces cannot possibly be necessary for extraordinary contemplative prayer.

We reply that, while admitting the fact of the presence of gratuitously given graces in the imperfect and even in sinners, we do not, for a moment, consider that this fact proves that such graces are not requisite for extraordinary contemplative prayer; and for this reason: imperfect contemplation, or that which is unaccompanied by charity, may be found in the Just who are only beginning to practise virtue, or who have already made some progress. Even wicked men may have it, and they may be favoured with ecstasies and raptures.[1] But in such persons as these the gift of contemplation does not proceed from the operation of the Holy Spirit, but from a gratuitously given grace, somewhat akin to the gift of prophecy. However, the contemplation of which we have been speaking, is perfect, and either presupposes that the soul given up to it is perfect, or it makes that soul perfect. Therefore, the origin whence it springs is not simply a gratuitously given grace; for, it is formed by charity and elevated by the special influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. When contemplation has arrived at this stage of its existence there are superadded to it, when God wishes and for as long a time as He wishes, one or more gratuitously given graces which embellish and perfect it. Therefore, from the fact that these graces are found in those who practise

[1] Alvarez. De Contemplat., Lib. v. c. 4.

*abuse* rather than from its *use*. They are to be found only in those persons who have entered upon contemplative prayer, without any call from God; with souls disfigured by faults and sins; and with hearts full of earthly attachments and affections. In the case of those, however, who, when invited to the marriage feast, go unto it with eagerness clothed in resplendent nuptial garments and adorned with the priceless gems of all the great virtues, no such unlovely peculiarities are to be found. They are filled with an intense love of God, and sweet humility encompasses them as with a delicious and undefinable perfume, entrancing all who either approach or hold converse with them.

That which has been said thus far, about the existence and the characteristics of ordinary and of extraordinary contemplation, as well as about the dispositions requisite in all who aspire to tread that sublime path, is amply sufficient to give the reader a notion of it, adequate to his present needs—especially as this work does not pretend to do anything more than treat of the principles of the spiritual life. We will, therefore, conclude this chapter by giving an example 'of the prayer of aspiration,' which is best adapted for souls who are speeding heavenwards on the way of ordinary or of extraordinary contemplation.[1]

*EXAMPLE OF THE PRAYER OF ASPIRATION.*[2]

I. O SWEETNESS of my heart! O life of my soul! O essence of my essence! O delightful rest of my spirit, withdraw me from all creatures that I may repose in Thee only! O Lord, my God! my hope and my refuge! O beloved of my heart's desire when wilt Thou destroy in me all imperfection and whatever is opposed to Thee? O Thou, of all others most dear to me! O beautiful Spouse—Spouse flowing with honey!—when wilt Thou adorn me with those necklaces

[1] For a more scientific treatment of the matter contained in this and in the preceding chapter, the reader is referred to Schram's Theologia Mystica, Tom. I., Cap. iii., 216, etc. For the exercise of prayer suitable to contemplation, see Father Baker's Sancta Sophia, Treat. III., sect. iv.

[2] Card. Bona, Iter Compend. ad Deum, Cap. xiii.

in which I shall be pleasing to Thine eyes? Draw me after Thee, most sweet Spouse, that I may cheerfully, purely, and perseveringly run in the odour of Thy perfumes. Make me according to Thine own heart; prepare for Thyself within me a pleasing habitation, that Thou mayest come to me and take up Thy abode in me. Inebriate me with the wine of Thy love; O my most beautiful Lover! unite me most intimately with Thyself and change me into Thyself. O uncreated fire! when wilt Thou consume me with the most ardent flame of Thy love; when shall I be wholly Thine, and all self-love be entirely destroyed in me? O my beloved! Whom alone I seek, when wilt Thou open at my knocking; when wilt Thou show Thyself to me and say: 'I am thy salvation? O immensity of sweetness! when wilt Thou wholly take me and absorb and hide me in Thyself? for, what it is for the ocean to swallow up one drop of water, that it is for Thee to absorb me. O my happiness, my complete and only joy, when wilt Thou, after removing all obstacles, introduce me into the chamber of Thy glory, and make me cleave to Thee, so as never any more to be separated from Thee?

II. I have sought Thy face, Thy face O Lord! will I seek; for, in vain do I labour as long as I seek not Thee. I desire not, O Lord! to follow Thee by the way of consolations and delights, but by the way of true and pure love. I desire naught of Thine, but only Thyself. For Thee only do I wish; Thee only do I desire and nothing else than Thee! In Thee, O Lord! is all my being, all my pleasure, all my good. If I call anything mine own, if I name myself, I mean only Thee Who alone art mine; all my essence is in Thee. My soul is as earth without water unto Thee; therefore, O most merciful God! pour forth upon me Thy most plenteous blessing, by dropping down upon me the dew of heaven and the fat of the land of the living. O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down, that the hardness of my heart might be taken away; and that, then, being wholly inflamed with Thy love, it might call upon Thee with groanings unutterable.

Woe is me! that my sojourning is prolonged and that I must, perforce, live in this place, from which I would gladly be away; that I must be absent from Thee, with Whom I so much desire to dwell. O Love! how deeply art Thou hidden! how little known! Thee do I desire, O Lord! and nothing else. Give me Thy Heart, and do Thou take mine! O that I were able most swiftly to traverse the whole world, and everywhere to cry aloud: Live the love of Jesus Christ! O most bright, and most delightful Trinity, one God! feed me with the influx of Thy graces! O most simple, and most delightful of all other goods! O unalterable good! fill me with Thyself; transfuse me into Thyself; lead me to the fountain-head of my soul. O beloved principle! whence I flow, when shall I be so happy as to find Thee? When shall I most ardently love Thee? When wilt Thou wholly take me away unto Thyself? When wilt Thou entirely absorb me and unite me unto Thyself?

III. When shall I sleep and take my rest in Thee, my most sweet peace? When shall the fragrance of Thy Divinity fully breathe upon me? When shall the never-ending day of the clear vision of Thee dawn upon me? By Thy pierced Heart, O most loving Jesus! transfix mine with the dart of Thy love, so that it may not be able to hold anything earthly, but that it may be upheld by the efficacy of Thy Divinity alone. Hail Jesus! Spouse flowing with honey, I salute and venerate Thee with the affection of all Thy elect. Stir up and govern by Thy life-giving Spirit, all the motions of my heart. O my love and my joy! when shall the shadow of this mortal life decline and the day of eternity begin to dawn? When shall I, having laid aside the burthen of this body, everlastingly praise Thee with Thy Saints? Admit me, O most beautiful Spouse! to the most sweet embraces of Thy love, that, constrained thereby, my spirit may burn and that it may be inflamed within me. O good, beyond all other good! O end without end! when shall I without measure and without end enjoy Thee? Thou art beautiful, my Beloved! and exceedingly to be

loved, not by the flesh and by the senses, but by the soul which believeth, which hath a pure heart, and which tendeth to invisible things. May I love Thee for Thy own sake only, my Lord and my God! and nothing else than Thee. O most delightful brilliancy of heaven! set my heart on fire with the most potent flame of charity; to Thee I offer all my interior powers, that Thou mayest set them on fire with flames which never die. As often as I inhale the air, I desire, O Lord Jesus! that with most heartfelt affection, I may draw Thee to myself, so that all my thoughts, words, and works may be united with Thy thoughts, words and works, and thus united, may be presented to God the Father for His greater honour and glory. Amen.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### *NECESSITY FOR DIVINE GRACE.*

In the introduction to this work, we mentioned divine grace as one of the instruments by which man attains to perfection, and we then promised to treat of it more at large in a later chapter. The time has now come to fulfil our promise; but before either giving a definition of grace, or pointing out the various divisions into which theologians have portioned it out, we think that it will tend to throw a clearer light upon its necessity, if we explain, as briefly as possible, the different states in which man may be supposed to exist, and to be assisted and perfected by divine grace.

By a state, we mean a firm and stable mode of existence suitable to human nature for the acquisition of its last end. With this before our mind's eye, we can conceive it possible that God should have created man in a state in which he would possess all the intrinsically constituent principles of his nature, together with that which either flows from or which is due to it. In this state he would be without sin; but he would not have sanctifying grace, or infused virtues, or the aid of graces of the supernatural order. He would be subject to hunger and to thirst, to disease, passions, ignorance, concupiscence, and death. The last end of such a man would be God as the Author of nature; and his happiness would consist in union with God by knowing Him through such of His footprints as he might be able to discover in the world around him.

This is what is called the state of pure nature; and though it was possible for God to have created man in that state, yet in His infinite mercy He did not do so

according to the teaching of the soundest theologians. He gave him existence in what is called the state of unimpaired nature which consists in the perfect subjection of the body to the soul, and of the sensitive appetite to the reason. It implies freedom from ignorance and concupiscence, from death and the strife of the passions.

Higher still than this, is the state of what is called 'original justice,' in which man's reason is perfectly subject to God, his sensitive appetite to reason, and his body to his soul. To this state, as we are taught, Almighty God raised our first parents after their creation. It was a condition of being enriched with many privileges. Their souls were inundated with all infused graces both theological and moral, and adorned with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, because they were endowed with sanctifying grace, of which all these priceless gifts are but so many consequences. Their bodies were not subject to hunger or to thirst; they knew neither sadness nor sorrow; they felt not the strife of discordant passions; concupiscence stirred up no revolt among the powers of their little kingdom; disease had no existence, and death had not yet been called in to avenge the offended majesty of God. In their intellect they possessed a plenitude of science which embraced within its circle the knowledge of things both natural and supernatural. For, as they were to be the teachers and rulers of the race which was to spring from them, it was necessary that they should be endowed with this knowledge; for, they were the fountain-head of the human race, not only for grace, but for instruction and government. Unhappily, though 'favoured of heaven so highly,' they did not long persevere in this privileged state; they 'fell off from their Creator, and trangressed His will, for one restraint, lords of the world besides.'[1]

By that sin they were spoiled of sanctifying grace and of the virtues annexed to it. They lost their integrity; they became subject to physical suffering and to death; their intellect was clouded, and the spirit of concupiscence

[1] Paradise Lost, Bk. i 30.

loosed from its subjection to their reason. All the gratuitous gifts of God were taken away from them, and even their natural gifts were greatly impaired; ignorance obscured the brightness of their intelligence; malice corrupted the integrity of their will; desire tyrannised over their concupiscible appetite, and weakness paralysed their irascible appetite. This is what is called the fallen state of man.

By the infinite mercy of God, he was not left in this truly pitiable condition. God sent His only begotten Son, Who took upon Himself our human nature, and by His infinite merits purchased for us the right to rise from this wretched state into what is called the state of repaired nature. The Sacred Scriptures, when speaking of this state make use of expressions which clearly show what a complete wreck had been made of our privileged condition by the malice of the primal transgression. In Holy Writ the state of repaired nature is called a redemption and a delivery from the hands of our enemies ;[1] a release from the captivity of the devil;[2] a resurrection ;[3] a healing from deadly sickness ;[4] a reconciliation after enmity; a renovation.

Therefore, the end of this state, is the same as that of the state of original justice. For, those who, by the grace of God, are enabled to persevere in His service till death, there is laid up, in the kingdom of God, that crown of supernatural happiness which would have been theirs had our first parents never fallen, but continued in the glorious statet o which, in the beginning, the Almighty had raised them.

That whereby man is enabled, in spite of his fallen condition and the wreck of his happier state, to reach the sublime destiny appointed for him by the goodness of God, is called *grace*. In its widest signification, it means anything that God bestows gratuitously upon us ; for, the Apostle, speaking of the remnant of Israel which had been cast off from God's favour, says that it had been saved according to the election of grace: 'And if by grace it

[1] St. Luke i. 68, 74. [2] 2 Tim. ii. 26. [3] Ephes. ii. [4] 2 Peter ii.

is not now by works, otherwise grace is no more grace.'[1] Under this head may be classed such gifts as health, strength, creation, preservation, and the like. But the limits of this far-reaching definition have been narrowed by theologians who employ the term '*grace*' to signify all gifts that are bestowed by God, in view of the merits of Christ, for the purpose of enabling man to win eternal life. Hence we may say that grace, in its strictly theological meaning is 'a supernatural gift, bestowed gratuitously by God, which of itself tends to a supernatural act and end.' Some of these gifts which God in His mercy deigns to bestow upon man, affect him from without. God makes known to him His divine Law; He confirms its authority by causing him to witness, or to hear of some miracle wrought in confirmation of its truth; He brings him within the magical influence of some gifted preacher; or He subjects him to the spell of the good example of someone whom he respects and loves. This species of grace is called 'external,' for the obvious reason that it affects man from without. There is another which interiorly affects him. It is called internal grace. This may be in him either as a habit, or as a transient act. It is subdivided, first, into those graces which are called 'gratuitously given,' and secondly, into that grace which is said to make a man pleasing to God.

The first are bestowed primarily not for the benefit of the person who receives them, but of those with whom he may be brought in contact. As enumerated by St. Paul, they are nine in number, namely: wisdom, science, faith, the power of healing, the gift of miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, the gift of tongues, and the interpretation of speeches.[2] The epithet 'gratuitously given,' is applied to them, not because they are gratuitously bestowed, for every grace is the free gift of God; but because, with respect to him upon whom they are conferred, they are in a special manner named *graces*.

[1] Rom. xi. 6. [2] 1 Cor. xii.

The second, or 'that grace which makes a man pleasing to God,' is so called because, primarily and of its own nature, it makes him upon whom it is bestowed, the friend and child of God. It is conferred upon him, not for the advantage of others, except, indeed, in an indirect way, but for his own personal sanctification and beatitude. This grace is called *actual*, when it is impressed upon the intellect or upon the will by a transient act by which those powers, which of their own nature cannot elicit supernatural acts, are helped to do so, and thus to obtain justice or to increase that justice which they have already received. But if it is a quality permanently inhering in the soul, making the man holy and pleasing to God, it is called *habitual*.

As then the eternal happiness of man depends upon these two kinds of grace, of which the first sanctifies him and the second preserves for him the holiness which makes him pleasing to God, it will be necessary for us to treat of them in succession. On the subject of actual grace, we will so direct our observations as to bring out clearly before the mind of the reader its necessity; and this we think will be most easily effected by showing first, what man is able to do without the aid of grace; and secondly, what he is not able to do unless prevented and upheld by its all-powerful assistance.

What then, we may ask, is man able to do, independently of grace? He is able, in the first place, in his present fallen state and even when deprived of the light of the Gospel, to execute *some* moral good of the natural order. This is the teaching of St. Paul, who maintained that the nations which were not of the Jewish family, and to whom, consequently, no revelation had been made by God, and on whom no law had been imposed, were able, notwithstanding, to observe some of the precepts of the law, and therefore, were a law unto themselves, by following the guidance of that unwritten code which spoke to them in their hearts. They were able, therefore, to do by nature, that is to say, without the aid of grace, without the light of

faith, some of those works which the Jews performed with the assistance of God, guided and illuminated by the light of His divine revelation. Thus, natural reason has shown men that they should be temperate; and many of the heathen philosophers were temperate. They led comparatively even chaste lives. We find among them many who were kind and gentle to the poor and to the sick, because the light of their reason pointed out to them that they would be sinning against their own flesh and blood if they steeled their bosoms against the emotion which the miseries of their fellow men awoke within them. Now, all such actions as these, are of their own nature morally good; for, if they are not they would never receive the commendation and blessing of Almighty God Himself. But the Scriptures expressly state that He praised and rewarded the Egyptian midwives because they did not deal unjustly by the Hebrew women, but, despising the edict of the tyrannical king, spared the helpless children, whom he had ordered them to destroy in the birth.[1]

Besides being able to do some moral good of the natural order, man in his fallen state is also able, without the aid of grace, to love God as the Author of nature, and to do this both with the love of benevolence and with the love of what is called 'praiseworthy concupiscence.' If this were not so, untrue would be St. Paul's words, in which he says that the nations which do not worship God, but which adore idols, are inexcusable. For, as he argues, they are able not only to learn and to know of God's existence from the glorious creation around them, but to love Him as the Author of good and to give Him thanks for the manifold benefits which He has, with so liberal a hand, scattered throughout the world. Therefore, his conclusion is that their pretended ignorance of God was wilful, being nothing more or less than a hiding of the truth in injustice, and because it was wilful, inexcusable; 'for, knowing God, they did not glorify Him as God, or give thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened.[2]

[1] Exod. i. 20. [2] Rom. i. 21

Now, as St. Augustine says,[1] 'God is worshipped only by love,' and since the heathen are able to worship Him as the Creator of the visible things which fall beneath the range of their senses, they are also able to love Him. If they are not, the Apostle's condemnation of them is unreasonable; because no one can be obliged to perform any act which he is unable to execute. Their love of God, however, is nothing more than a natural love, because the source of it is only a natural knowledge of Him.

Without appealing to authority for arguments to establish this conclusion, an excellent proof of it may be drawn from reason. This tells us that the will, by its own unaided force, is able to love that which the intellect is able to know naturally, unless, indeed, there is either some physical or some moral hindrance impeding its action. The question, therefore, is, can the intellect either know or learn by natural means, that there is a God Who on His own account is supremely worthy of love? There can be no doubt whatever that it can. For, in the first place, there is no physical impediment to hide from its view the object to be loved; that object is made present to it by the material creation, with which the senses come in contact at every turn; and the will, being intrinsically free, is sufficiently excited by that object thus made known to it, to cause it to pour out upon that object all its treasure of love. In the next place, there is no moral hindrance to stand in the way of the intelligence or of the will, and debar the one or the other from knowing and from loving its object which is supremely worthy of man's love; for, in the case supposed, there is no question of a grave temptation to retard the motions, or of any obstacle to impede the affections of the will.

Furthermore, fallen man without the aid of supernatural grace is sometimes able to overcome some slight temptations. Baius maintained that he could not; and his proposition was condemned both by Pius V. and by Gregory XIII., whose anathemas clearly point out what the Church

[1] Epist. 110.

thinks upon this subject. For, while admitting with St. Augustine[1] that in the state of fallen nature the judgment or *arbitrium* of the will has little weight, she does not thereby wish to teach that it has *no* weight at all. It has *some* weight; for, when a faculty is naturally able to do anything, it is also able to do that thing even when some slight impediment stands in the way. If it was not able to do this, then any hindrance which is said to be slight, must, at the same time, be admitted to be grave. No one, however, will maintain such an absurdity. As, therefore, we have already proved that man in his fallen state and without the aid of grace, is able to perform *some* good of the natural order, so, from what we have just said, it will follow that a slight temptation will not be able to prevent him from doing that same good by his natural powers, even when unaided by supernatural grace.

Thus far, then, we have seen what man is able to do without God's grace: he can will and execute some moral good of the natural order; he can love God as the Author of nature; and he can vanquish slight temptations which stand in his way and endeavour to prevent him from doing that good act of the natural order which his nature is able to effect.

Let us now endeavour to make clear to ourselves the necessity for divine grace, by considering what man is unable to effect unless prevented and upheld by its all-powerful aid. At the outset we may state, in a general sort of way, that fallen man, without the aid of interior preventing grace, can do nothing that will lead him to eternal life. This is a bold statement, but it is strictly true. For, he cannot make, by faith, the first step towards God unless he is drawn by God: 'No man,' says Our blessed Lord, 'can come to Me unless the Father, Who hath sent Me, draw him;'[2] that is to say, by faith, which is the gift of God only. He cannot, unaided by God, do even a *little* in the way of salvation; for, the words of Jesus Christ are absolute: 'Without Me, you can do *nothing*.'[3] He cannot

[1] De perf. justitiæ. [2] St. John vi. 44. [3] *Ibid.* xv. 5.

so much as think a good thought, or have any merit, unless the thought has come from Jesus Christ, and the merit has been acquired by the aid of His preventing grace: 'It is God,' says St. Paul, 'that worketh in you both to will and to accomplish'[1]—that is, in order to salvation. Writing to the Corinthians, he tells them that 'we are not sufficient,' or able, 'to think anything of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is from God.'[2] It is evident, therefore, that the Holy Scriptures regard man as utterly incapable of performing any salutary work unless he has the aid of God's grace.

Not only is fallen man unable to do any salutary work unless upheld by the grace of God, but he cannot even begin one unless God gives him the power by means of His preventing grace. The Apostle puts this truth before the Corinthians in terms so precise that these terms cannot be misconstrued: 'He Who hath *begun* a good work in you,' he says, 'will perfect the same unto the day of Christ Jesus.'[3] In language equally clear he states the same doctrine for the Philippians when he says: 'It is God that worketh in us both to will and to accomplish.'[4] Again; so necessary is grace for man in his present state, that even when cleansed from his sins and made just in the sight of God, he cannot, without the special aid of divine grace, persevere until the end of his life in the justice which he has acquired. According to St. Augustine,[5] this power of perseverance is a special gift of God. For, if it is not, with what truth can the Apostle say, when writing to the Philippians: 'Unto you it is given from Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him?' Now, belief in Christ pertains to the beginning of a new life; and long-suffering for the sake of Christ, to the end or perfection of such a life, which is crowned by perseverance. But, as the Apostle clearly states, both are the gifts of God; and therefore, just as His grace is necessary to begin that new life, which leads to an everlasting life, so grace is also neces-

[1] Philip. ii. 13. [2] 2. Cor. iii. 5. [3] Philip. i. 6.
[4] Philip, ii. 13. [5] De dono perseverantiæ, Cap. ii.

sary to enable a man to go on leading such a life as will ensure his crown. This doctrine he confirms still further in the seventh chapter, in which, after citing these words of the seventy-ninth Psalm: 'Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, and upon the son of the man whom Thou hast confirmed for Thyself, that we depart not from Thee,' he says: 'Therefore it is owing to that hand and not to our own that we depart not from God. That hand is the hand of Him Who said to Jeremias: "I will give My fear in their heart that they may not revolt from Me."[1] Hence it is that He wishes us to ask Him not to be led into temptation; for if we are not led thereunto, we do not depart from Him. Now, this might be granted to us even without any prayer on our part; but by bidding us ask for this favour, He wished us to understand whence it is that we receive these benefits." In the fifth chapter of the same work, he thus comments upon that petition in the Lord's prayer, in which we ask to be preserved from temptation and from evil: 'When those who are holy say "and lead us not into temptation," what else do they pray for, than for perseverance in holiness? Now, this perseverance is a gift of God, for, we ask it of Him. If we do so, and at the same time believe that He cannot give it, we sin against Him; for, it is an insult to ask anyone for anything which we are quite aware that he does not give.'

If we admit these various reasonings of the great Doctor, we may venture a step farther and argue that if man cannot persevere in the justice with which God has been pleased to endow him, much less is he able, by moral power unaided by grace, to observe all the precepts of the natural law, even in substance—that is, so as to avoid all the sins which may be committed against it. The Apostle admits this moral impossibility when he says: 'I see another law in my members (that is, concupiscence), fighting against the law of my mind (that is, the natural law), and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members.'

[1] Jer. xxxii. 40.

In consequence of this he cried out; 'Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' He answers: 'The grace of God, by Jesus Christ Our Lord.'[1] It must be observed that in these various passages there is question of the natural law, which is opposed by concupiscence. Also it is stated in precise terms that the law cannot be fulfilled without the aid of divine grace. Moreover, its fulfilment is regarded as to substance only, that is to say, only in order not to sin. Therefore, the natural law which says: 'Thou shalt not covet,' cannot be fulfilled, even substantially without the aid of God's grace. Hence it is that the Wisest of Men has said: 'And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent unless God gave it, I went to the Lord and besought Him with my whole heart.'[2] This inability to observe the precepts of the natural law is a moral, not a physical, impotency. For, all these precepts taken collectively and considered according to their substance, do not surpass the strength of the human will, even in our present state, since that strength was not taken away by sin, but only weakened. Hence the weakness, or inability to observe the law, is a moral weakness, consisting in the rebellion of the appetite and in the gravity of all the precepts taken together. For, the will being feeble and inconstant, is unable to put forth all its strength; and hence it is that we say its inability is not a physical, but a moral one; for, if it were to rouse up and to put forth all the natural power that is in it, it would be able to observe the natural law. But, as we have seen, the aid by which it is enabled to put into action its own natural powers, is divine grace; and therefore, without the addition of that moral support, it is powerless to observe the natural law in its entirety.

In consequence of this inability of man to observe all the precepts of the natural law, unless aided by divine grace, it follows also that in his present state he is unable to love God above all things, as the Author of nature, with a perfect love which shall be effective and last for a long

[1] Rom. vii. 22—25. [2] Wisd. viii 21.

time. It is probable, nevertheless, that he is able, by the strength of nature only, to elicit some act of appreciatively supreme love. We have said, 'in his present fallen state,' for, if he were in his integral or complete state, he would not need the gift of grace naturally to love God above all things; but he would need the assistance of God to move him to this act. In his present state, however, man needs the aid of grace to supply the loss which his nature has sustained by the fall, in order to produce even such an act as this. We say, then, that man is not able to love God, as the Author of nature, with a perfect love, unless he is aided by grace. For, such a love implies the observance of all the commandments of God. It means that the will is ready, absolutely and efficaciously in all things to please God—to avoid all that displeases Him; and that in point of fact it really does this. But we have already proved that fallen man, without the assistance of grace, cannot fulfil all the precepts of God, even though they are but such as are of the natural law. For, so great is the frailty of his corrupt nature, and so strong is his propensity to enjoy the good things that present themselves before his senses, that, without aid from on high, he cannot withhold his affections from fastening themselves upon these transitory things, or prevent them from withdrawing themselves from those that are eternal.

Nevertheless, it is probable that without the aid of grace, and by the strength of his nature only, he is able to elicit some act of appreciatively supreme love. For, if this power be denied to man, it will be because the assistance of grace is considered to be either physically or morally necessary for him to produce the act. Those who look upon grace as physically necessary for this, regard it as the physical principle of the act and consider the will of itself to be intrinsically incapable of producing that act. On the other hand, those who look upon grace as only morally necessary for the production of this act of appreciatively supreme love, consider it to be necessary only as a help to remove impediments, and not as a something without which an

essentially constituent part of the act would be wanting. But for such an act as that about which we are speaking, grace is necessary in neither of these ways. It is not necessary as a physical principle; for, the act is in itself a natural one, since the intellect is able naturally to know God as the Supreme Good, and therefore, it can propose Him as such to the will. Nor is it necessary morally; for, we are speaking only of the possibility of some act for the prevention of which there are no grave temptations to be conquered, and against which the hindrances are only such as proceed from external sources.

Finally, our fallen nature is so weak, that without the aid of grace it is unable to overcome any grave temptation. This truth cannot fail to impress itself upon anyone who reads the Holy Scriptures. For, in numberless passages the inspired writers attribute their victories over the devil, the world and the flesh, to the supernatural assistance of God's grace, and not to any inborn power inherent in their own nature: 'By Thee,' says the Psalmist, 'I shall be delivered from temptation.'[1] When surrounded by the enemies of his soul, and well-nigh overwhelmed by their onset, he again attributes his deliverance to the powerful aid of God: 'Being pushed, I was overturned that I might fall; but the Lord supported me.'[2] Our Lord Himself points out to us the source whence we are to look for seasonable aid, when He bids us 'Watch and pray that we enter not into temptation.'[3] The Wise Man indicates the secret of his strength, when he tells us that he could not have obtained and kept the treasure of his chastity unless God had given that treasure to him.[4] St. Paul, too, in that famous chapter in which he recounts all that he had done for the Church of God, and all the favours with which God had privileged him, tells us that the Lord had suffered him to be most grievously assaulted by the devil, as a sort of counterpoise to the surpassing favours so lavishly poured forth upon him; that he had most earnestly petitioned to be freed from this diabolical molestation; and that God had

[1] Ps. xvii. 30. [2] Ps. cxvii. 13 [3] St. Matt. xxvi. 41. [4] Wisd. viii. 21.

comforted him with the assurance that, although so hotly and so fiercely attacked and buffeted by the devil, yet the help of divine grace was sufficient for him, and would ensure him the victory.[1] Therefore, from these remarkable words we may conclude that his nature, if left to its own strength, would have been unequal to the contest, and would have succumbed to the violent and persistent assaults of his spiritual enemy.

How necessary, then, is the aid of divine grace for us in our present fallen state? We cannot do any salutary work independently of it; we cannot even begin such a work without its aid; still less can we persevere in it when once we have begun, unless upheld by a strength greater than our own. The observance of all the precepts of even the natural law is an impossibility for us, and so feeble is our will-power that we cannot perfectly and above all things love God as the author of nature, or resist any grave temptation, unless God stands by us to protect and sustain us with His all-powerful hand. It is, therefore, a matter of the gravest importance that we should most earnestly seek for that help of which we stand in so great need. God abundantly gives it to all men; and although the impulse to pray comes from Him, as well as do all things else, yet He deigns to make prayer a condition without which those graces that ensure salvation are not bestowed. Therefore, we must unceasingly lift up our minds and our hearts to Him, and pray that He would vouchsafe in His infinite mercy to grant us that without which the blood shed for us will have been shed in vain. We must in all humility go to Him, as the poor who stand before the rich; we must confess before Him that we are nothing; that we have nothing; that we can do nothing which will lead us to eternal life; that we are barren, profitless earth. He must give us the seed; He must help us to dig and to plant; He must send us the early and the latter rain; He must give us the increase, and reap the harvest, and lay it up, together with our own worthless selves, in His heavenly garners.

[1] 2 Cor. xii, 9.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### *OF INEFFICACIOUS AND OF EFFICACIOUS GRACE.*

THEOLOGIANS apply to divine grace various epithets which serve to bring out clearly before our minds the multifarious ways in which Almighty God makes use of it to move and to influence the souls of men. It is called *exciting grace*, when, like sunlight streaming down upon the closed orbs of a slumbering or of a drowsy man, it produces upon the intellect and upon the will a sort of indeliberate movement, by which we are urged to do good or to withdraw from evil. But because God produces that good motion in us, without any co-operation on our part, the grace by which it is effected is termed *operative grace*. When we say that this is done without any co-operation on our part, we must not be understood to imply that there is no physical or vital concurrence on the part of the subject influenced by grace; that would be an impossibility. For, since the illumination of the intellect and the pious movement of the will are vital acts, they must be of the same nature as is the principle whence they spring—that is to say, vital and physical. All that is meant, therefore, is that God produces the movement in our souls without our free consent. When grace anticipates and prepares the will to acquiesce in that which is good, by causing in it the beginning of a motion towards what is upright and virtuous, it is called *preventing grace*. Furthermore, when exciting grace has enlightened and moved the will, and when God supernaturally co-operates with it in the execution of all supernatural and free acts, the grace by which He effects this is called *helping* or *co-operating* grace. Also, when the good

movement or purpose begun in the will by exciting grace is carried into effect, the grace enabling a man to perfect that first movement of his intelligence and of his will towards good, is called '*subsequent grace.*' That good purpose, however, would not itself exist, unless grace had gone before it.

These divisions, however, are of little moment when compared with that which portions out actual grace into what is called *sufficient* grace, and what is called *efficacious* grace; for round this division are grouped the opposing parties that have divided the theological schools into four great camps. Of their contentions and systems we will say as little as possible; but our aim in this chapter shall be to give as clear and as brief an exposition of *sufficient* and of *efficacious* grace, as will enable the reader to understand how the efficacy of divine grace may be reconciled with the freedom of the human will.

Let us, then, in the first place, give our attention to what is called *sufficient*, grace. The term *sufficient* may in three different ways be applied to grace. When we look upon grace as a help from God, without considering whether it is or it is not joined with action on the part of man, it is said to be *precisely sufficient*; and in this sense is opposed to that which we might call *insufficient* grace. If we regard grace as an aid given by God, supplying the will with strength equal and proportioned to the good effect really produced, it is said to be *positively* sufficient, and in this sense it is the same as *efficacious* grace. God Himself gives this name to that help which He bestowed upon the great Apostle, to enable him to withstand the assaults of the devil. For, when St. Paul prayed to be free from the buffeting of Satan's wicked angel, God said to him: 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'[1] Again; when grace, although furnishing the will with strength equal and proportioned to the production of the effect for which it is given, and which God ultimately intends, yet does not actually produce that effect, through the fault of him who is unwilling to

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 9

consent to grace, it is called *negatively sufficient* grace. In this sense it is opposed to efficacious grace, and is said to be *merely* sufficient. It is of this grace only that we speak, when we use the words "*sufficient* grace." By it we Catholics understand that divine help which gives to the will for the performance of any good work, a power, relatively to the will's present circumstances, complete and unhampered.

From passages innumerable, which may be found in the pages of the Sacred Scriptures, it is manifest that such a grace as that which we have been describing, is offered by God to man. Rebuking the Jews for their incredulity and obstinate resistance to His will, Almighty God says: 'Judge between Me and My vineyard: What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes and it hath brought forth wild grapes?'[1] By these words God clearly shows us that He had done what He ought to have done, and that on the part of His goodness and mercy, nothing was wanting to make the Jewish people turn from their evil ways and do what was pleasing in His sight; and that in spite of this they had continued to act most wickedly. Now, if nothing was wanting to them on the part of God, it is evident that they had, relatively to the circumstances in which they were placed, a power to do well, which was complete and unhampered. Therefore, the grace given to them by God for this purpose was amply sufficient. If it were not, it would have been false for God to say that, as far as He was concerned, nothing was wanting to them; His expectation that they would bring forth worthy fruits of penance would have been vain, if He did not furnish them with strength to produce those fruits.

Not only, then, it is true that God offers unto man a grace which, relatively to man's present circumstances, is amply sufficient to enable him to do all that is required of

[1] Isaias v. 4.

him, but it is an article of our Catholic faith, that man is able to reject that grace, and that in numberless instances he actually does reject it. If this is not so, what is the meaning of such texts as the following?—'I called, and you refused: I stretched out My hand, and there was none that regarded. You have despised all My counsel, and have neglected My reprehensions.'[1] 'I have spread forth My hands all the day to an unbelieving people.'[2] In these passages, 'the calling, the stretching forth of the hands, the counsels of God interiorly speaking to the soul,' indicate grace, truly and relatively sufficient, either offered or given by God; for, if it were not so, it would have been unjust, on the part of God, to expostulate with and to rebuke for not obeying Him, those who were incapable of so doing. It is evident, therefore, that in the case of those of whom the Prophet is speaking, the human will resisted the impulse to obey, and rejected the help which would have enabled it to comply with the injunctions of God; and it did this, by a refusal which was perfectly free, as is implied in the words 'and you have despised, refused, rejected,' and the like.

If this conclusion is not true, then St. Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians, 'not to receive the grace of God in vain,'[3] was nugatory; and St. Stephen's vehement invective unjust, and little better than abuse, when, addressing his Judges, he called them 'a stiff-necked generation, uncircumcised in heart and ears, who always resisted the Holy Ghost.'[4] Not only do the great Apostle and the zealous Deacon take it for granted that the grace of which they spoke was internal and amply sufficient to produce the effect which, however, did not flow from it, but also Our blessed Lord, with His own all-holy lips, proclaims the same truth in terms so precise and clear, that the wonder is how anyone should be so blind as not to see the palpable fact to which they have reference. Addressing the cities in which He had performed the greatest number and the

[1] Prov. i. 24, 25. Isaias lxv. 2.
[3] 2 Cor. vi. 1. [4] Acts vii. 51.

most astounding of His miracles, He upbraids them for their stolid unbelief, and says: 'Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida; for, if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they would long ago have done penance in sackcloth and ashes.'[1] Therefore, on the subject of sufficient grace we may say, in conclusion, that it is clear, from these words of Our Lord, that the grace to do penance had really and truly been bestowed upon the sinful cities Corozain and Bethsaida and that they were able, not remotely and absolutely, but proximately and relatively, to bring forth those fruits of penance which Our Saviour expected from them.[2]

Besides sufficient grace which, though adequate to gain the effect for which God bestows it, yet does not gain that effect because that sufficient grace is resisted and rejected by the human will, there is also an efficacious grace, by which God is able certainly and infallibly to bend our wills whithersoever He pleases. For, in the book of Proverbs we read: 'The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord: whithersoever He will, He shall turn it.'[3] Also St. Paul says: 'It is God that worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to His good will.'[4] In treating of this grace, the difficulty is not to establish its existence, for, about that there is no controversy; but to explain clearly how it moves the will to assent, and in what way it obtains the effect for which it is given by Almighty God. In other words, we have to endeavour to point out the means by which it may be distinguished from merely sufficient grace.

In order to do this we may be permitted to observe, that

[1] St. Matt. xi. 21.

[2] Grace is said to be *proximately sufficient* when it gives immediate power to execute any work ultimately intended by God, and is also called *the grace of action*. It is said to be *remotely sufficient*, when it gives only mediate power to implore a more plentiful aid from God, which will not be given unless man shall first pray for it; but which will certainly be given when, in obedience to the first grace, he actually does pray for it. This is called the grace of prayer.

[3] Chap. xxi. 1.

[4] Philip. ii. 13.

efficacious grace may be regarded either in what is called its first act—that is to say, before it obtains the consent of the will, or in its second act, namely, when that consent has followed or it has been obtained. The efficacy of grace in the *first act* must be attributed to the power of preventing grace, which is adequate to the production of the good effect for the eliciting of which it is bestowed. Hence that efficacy is essential and intrinsic to grace, no matter whether grace obtains, or it does not obtain the effect which it is intended to procure. In the *second act* this efficacy of grace must be attributed to the same power of preventing grace, considered jointly with the effect which, through its instrumentality, has been obtained; and therefore, in this effect we perceive that helping grace and the co-operation of the human will are found united.

After these preliminary remarks, we trust that the reader will bear in mind that when we speak of efficacious grace, we mean it in its first and not in its second act. For, this latter involves consent, inasmuch as it is formally the operation from which the will cannot dissent. To maintain the contradictory proposition would be to assert that the will does not operate, while it is actually operating. We have to deal, therefore, simply with efficacious grace in its first act, and our method of procedure shall be—first, to refute the errors concerning it taught by the so-called 'Reformers'; and secondly, to give a brief outline of the various systems devised by Catholic theologians to explain how it moves the human will to act without destroying the liberty of the will.

Calvin, speaking of efficacious grace, attributes its power to a necessity which it imposes upon the human will, in consequence of which necessity that will is no longer free to accept or to refuse, it must act in accordance with the impulse of divine grace. Jansenius considers the efficacy of grace to consist in a certain indeliberate delectation arising from grace itself, a delectation which is superior to and which masters the delectation begotten of concupiscence.

In opposition, therefore, to the teaching of Calvin, we maintain that under the influence of grace, the human will is free, and that it has that liberty of action which is called the liberty of indifference—that is to say, a freedom to choose whatever shall seem good to it. This is evident from the simple fact that, throughout the Sacred Scriptures, we meet with precepts given to direct the will of man in the right way; we find that he is threatened with punishment if he does not choose to walk in it; and is promised rewards if he does; furthermore, he is counselled to avoid evil, to turn aside from whatever might either allure him into evil ways, or weaken that allegiance which he owes to God. All this presupposes, in the first place, the aid of divine grace, which enables the will to choose what is good and to reject what is evil; and in the second place, either the free co-operation of the human will with the aid vouchsafed to it by God, or its rejection thereof, if it shall seem good to it not to accept His bounty. Again; the Sacred Scriptures repeatedly promise supernatural rewards to man, on condition that he is willing to accept them. Now, as we have already seen, these rewards cannot be obtained without the aid of grace; consequently, the Sacred Scriptures suppose and take for granted, that the will is free under the operation of grace. It is to those that do good works under these conditions that the Wise Man promises glory;—'who could transgress, and who have not transgressed; who could do evil things, and who have not done them.'[1] To maintain, as Calvin did, that the human will is not free under the operation of grace, is to suppose that free-will was destroyed by original sin. If this were so, there would be no merit in works which are done by the aid of grace; for, there can be no merit where there is no freedom. Therefore, the efficacy of grace cannot be said to consist in a necessity imposed upon the will to assent to the movements of grace.

[1] Eccl. xxxi. 10.

Nor can we agree with Jansenius, who maintains that its efficacy must be sought for in that indeliberate, heavenly delectation, which is superior to, and is master over that lesser opposing concupiscence which continually draws us towards what is sinful; for, to assert that man cannot dissent from the motion of God exciting him to good, or resist divine grace, when he is moved and excited by it to do good, is heretical; because the Council of Trent[1] and the Council of Soissons[2] teach and define that he can. The latter of these Councils, in its fifteenth decree, when speaking of the necessity for grace, says: 'So great a necessity does not prejudice free-will; nor is God's aid, which draws the will to assent, of such a nature that it cannot be resisted.' Therefore, all those who side with Jansenius are in direct opposition to this teaching of the Council, and thereby are guilty of the sin of heresy.

In order to explain how it is that the liberty of the human will is not in any way prejudiced when man is brought under the influence of efficacious grace, theologians have devised various systems which are known by the names of those who gave these systems birth; thus, one is called the Thomistic, another the Augustinian, another the Molinist, and another the Congruist system. The last-named system was built up by Suarez, in order to meet the difficulties which opposed the Molinist theory. It is a mitigated form of Molinism, rather than an entirely new system. According to those who follow the system of St. Thomas, not only it is Almighty God that gives to His creatures the power of action, but also, when that power passes into act, it is He that is still the first mover of that act. Hence, they maintain that, for every act performed by man, there is necessary a certain divine action, by which the power to act, already bestowed upon him, is moved into act in a way which is consonant with his nature. Now man, as all Catholics teach, is a free agent; and therefore, although moved to act by Almighty God through means of efficacious grace, yet he is moved in a way suitable to a free nature—

[1] Sess. VI., Can. 4. [2] Decret. 15.

that is to say, he is moved freely. Consequently, all who follow this school teach that grace is intrinsically efficacious, or in other words, that it contains within itself a power to bend the will of man to its impulse. For, as God or the First Cause, cannot depend upon a secondary cause—that is, upon the will of man—so also the efficacy of grace cannot depend upon the consent of the will, but the consent of the will depends upon the efficacy of grace. In other words, grace does not become efficacious because man consents, but man consents because grace is efficacious.

All who profess to follow the doctrine of St. Augustine, teach that the efficacy of grace consists in a certain celestial overmastering delectation, which impels the will to assent in such a way that it is morally impossible for it not to yield to such a grace. The natural consequence of this moral impossibility to dissent, is that the will infallibly and necessarily gives its consent to the motion of grace. Nevertheless, it does not thereby lose its liberty of action; for, since this impossibility of dissent is only moral, it leaves the will flexible to either part, although it most certainly and infallibly determines and necessitates its entire willingness and inclination to one part. According to the teaching of the Louvain doctors, it effects this by a superiority of delectation; according to Quenin and Hebert, by the vehemence of its motion.

The followers of Molina consider that the efficacy of grace consists in the consent of the will. In their system, efficacious grace, before man's consent to it, in no way differs from sufficient grace. God's grace, they maintain, is always the same; when the will consents to its motion, grace becomes efficacious; when the will does not consent, grace remains inefficacious. When asked how it is possible that God's will should be certainly and infallibly done in us, if the efficacy of grace depends upon the consent of the human will, they reply: 'This is brought about by that knowledge (*scientia media*) by which God infallibly knows, before every decree, all our conditionally future acts, both those that are free and those that are contingent. In virtue of this

knowledge, God knows to what grace a man will certainly, but altogether freely give his assent. Hence, if God, in His mercy, wishes a man to do any salutary act, He decrees to bestow upon that man such a grace as He foresees will certainly gain his assent. The grace thus conferred is efficacious, and it is as infallibly certain that it will obtain its effect, as it is infallibly certain that the foreknowledge of God cannot be deceived.

In order to meet the difficulties arising out of the system of Molina, the great Suarez softened down its apparent asperities and incongruities, by devising another which is called the *Congruist* system. In this, grace is looked upon as twofold in its nature: the first is called *congruous*, because suitable to the character, inclinations, and other circumstances of him who receives it, and to which God by His *scientia media* has foreseen from all eternity that he will give his assent. The second is called *incongruous*, because not sufficiently adapted to the character, inclinations, and other circumstances in which he who receives it may happen to be living, and consequently it does not obtain his consent, and therefore it is nothing more than sufficient grace. With this distinction clearly before his mind, Suarez maintains that Almighty God, in accordance with His antecedent will to save all mankind, has prepared for all, such graces as may, by the consent of the will, become efficacious and sufficient for salvation. If He wishes any salutary act to be performed, He so orders its circumstances that congruous graces will be bestowed. He then accommodates the grace to the character of the man, and bestows it in such suitable circumstances as He knows will infallibly procure the man's free assent. From this it is evident that God effects the consent of the will, by arranging circumstance and by bestowing suitable grace; and that the salutary act follows as a necessary consequence, because the foreknowledge of God cannot be deceived.

From this necessarily brief account of efficacious grace, and of the various systems devised for the purpose of explaining how it wins the consent of man, it is evident

that the followers of St. Thomas and of St. Augustine teach that grace is efficacious in consequence of a virtue or force intrinsic to itself; while those who adhere to the school of Molina, attribute its power to an extrinsic cause. If anyone choose to follow either the Thomistic or the Augustinian system, we must confess that it will bring out the efficacy of grace more clearly before his mind than does the method devised by Molina; because it teaches that man's consent is the gift of God; that God works in him both to will and to accomplish; and that grace is so omnipotent that it softens all hardness of heart and causes man, from being unwilling, to become willing to accomplish the good pleasure of Almighty God.

The Molinist system, however, has the great advantage of making human liberty, in salutary acts, more intelligible to us than does either the system of St. Thomas or the system of St. Augustine; because the Molinist system maintains that grace is only then efficacious when the will gives to it its free assent, and that it becomes inefficacious by the with-holding of that assent. It is admitted on all hands, and by the followers of each of the systems, that God gives to all men sufficient grace, and that the grace thus given bestows the power of action. According to the first two systems, however, the power to act conferred by sufficient grace, never passes into act unless what St. Thomas calls a grace of a *higher* nature, and St. Augustine a grace of a more *powerful* nature, is superadded, in order to move man to give his assent. According to even the Congruist theory, grace which is bestowed in incongruous circumstances never obtains its effect; because, to obtain its effect, it requires suitable circumstances. Only in the system of Molina do we find that grace which etymologically, and as far as human understanding can grasp the term, is truly sufficient; for, it is in this system only, that grace which is the same in nature and in character becomes efficacious if the will consents, and remains inefficacious if the will resists.

As we have already prolonged our remarks upon this

intricate question beyond the limits which we had fixed for ourselves, we will at once draw them to a close, with the observation that each is at liberty to follow whichever system meets with his approval and adapts itself most easily to the temper of his mind. With respect to divine grace, all the orthodox systems admit the dogmas which the Church teaches and defends—to wit: that grace is merely gratuitous; that efficacious grace is distinct from merely sufficient grace; that efficacious grace does not destroy liberty; that in the hands of God it is the surest and most infallible means for bending our will whithersoever He pleases. Finally, instead of carping at, and criticising systems of grace, let it be our aim to beg its all-powerful aid from the Fountain of good, that, being prevented and upheld by His Almighty arm, we may be enabled to win the crown of everlasting life, which Our dearest Lord purchased with His precious blood.

# CHAPTER XVIII.

## *DISTRIBUTION OF GRACE.*

It is the teaching of all schools of Catholic theology, that God gives to everyone that divine aid which enables his will to perform any good work, and bestows upon him for the purpose of winning eternal beatitude a power which, relatively to his present circumstances, is free and unhampered. In other words, He gives to all, amply sufficient grace to save their immortal souls. To maintain any other doctrine would be to hold opinions concerning God, most repugnant to the idea of the Supreme Being. It would be to make Him a tyrant who imposes laws which it is impossible to keep, and loads the shoulders of his subjects with burthens which they are not able to bear.

It will, therefore, be our aim in this chapter to show that God in His infinite goodness makes it possible for all to win the crown of everlasting life, by giving them sufficient grace to keep His Law, if they are already just; to repent and rise from their sins, if they have lost His friendship; to come to the light of the true faith, if they are living in the darkness of paganism; and, in the case of infants, to be brought to the saving waters of baptism, and thus to obtain that white garment which will entitle them to take their places at the wedding-feast of the Lamb.

Out of the vast family of Almighty God, Who wills not that any should perish, let us first consider the just, who deservedly hold the honoured place of first-born among His sons. To them God gives grace which is truly and relatively sufficient to enable them to keep all His precepts, whenever any of those precepts presents itself before their intelligence, and claims their dutiful obedience. This is so evident and so consonant with right reason, that no one who

is even a little conversant with Sacred Scripture will venture to gainsay it. In St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians there will at once occur to his mind that passage in which, addressing the whole body of neophytes, among whom there were sinners as well as just, he says: 'God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with the temptation issue (that is to say, will give you help), that you may be able to bear it.'[1] But if God did not give to every just man graces truly and relatively sufficient to enable him to keep the Law, whenever the observance of its precepts becomes urgent upon him, God could not with any truth be said so to temper the fury of the devil's onslaught as to shield man from being tempted beyond his strength, or to furnish him with such aid as will enable him to bear the trial. Hence, unless we admit that every just man is endowed with a sufficiency of grace to purchase everlasting life, we shall be forced to confess that St. Paul had no warrant for comforting his converts with the consoling doctrine that God was ever at their side to restrain the fury of their enemies, and to uphold them by the might of His all-powerful arm. We shall be forced, moreover to contradict the words of Our blessed Lord Himself, Who tells us that 'His yoke is sweet, and His burthen light.'[2] How can His yoke or His commands be anything but most harsh and most grievous, if those upon whose necks they press are unable to stagger along beneath their weight, and if they receive no aid from Him to bear up under their crushing burthen? Deservedly, therefore, is he who is bold enough to deny so self-evident a proposition stricken by the anathema of the Church which, speaking by the mouth of the Council of Trent, says: 'If anyone shall say that the precepts of God cannot be kept by even a just man, when aided by grace, let him be anathema.'[3]

Even if a man is not just, but a sinner, that is to say, he has shaken off the yoke of God, but he is not hardened in his

[1] 1 Cor. x. 13. [2] St. Matt. xi. 30.
[3] Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., Can. 18.

rebellion, even unto him there is given grace sufficient to rise from his sin and to avoid any fresh defection. By the mouth of the Prophet Ezechiel, Almighty God protests that He does not wish the death of the wicked: 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.'[1] From these solemn words it is evident that God truly and sincerely wishes, at least those sinners who are not hardened in their sins, not to perish, but to turn from their evil courses. A conversion, however, always presupposes sufficient grace; for, it would be impossible for man, by his own unaided efforts, to turn from evil. Hence, it is quite clear that God, Who wishes for this conversion, does really bestow upon the sinner, grace which enables him to rise from his sin and to avoid a fresh relapse.

Moreover, so great is the goodness of God, that He does not abandon even those who have hardened their hearts against His grace; He offers them help which is sufficient to soften their obduracy and to preserve them from any further transgression. This is the doctrine commonly held by Catholic Divines, and it must be looked upon as certain. For, the words of God, spoken by the Prophet Ezechiel, hold good for the hard-hearted, as well as for sinners of a less malicious type; for, in the language of Scripture, no one is called impious or wicked, unless he is obdurate in his sin. Also, from St. Stephen's invective against the Jews, who had brought him before the Council, we can see that, though they were hardened in sin, yet they were the objects of the fatherly care of God, Who constantly offered them graces sufficient to change their evilly disposed hearts and to turn them to listen with docility to the teachings of the Gospel: 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,' exclaimed the zealous Deacon, 'you always resist the Holy Ghost;' that is to say, that when, by His grace, God interiorly moved them, they refused to follow its gentle impulse; they stifled it and trampled it under their feet, as they had already trampled upon the

[1] Ezech. xxxiii. 11.

Saviour of the world. It is this goodness of God in bearing so patiently with the obstinacy of sinners in their wicked ways, and in still inciting them to penance, notwithstanding their indifference, that St. Paul commends so highly, when in his Epistle to the Romans he says: 'Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God.'[1] Rich, therefore, in mercy is Our good Lord to all those who know the truth, but who have unhappily fallen away from it.

His fatherly pity in willing that none of His children should be lost, extends itself also to those who live in infidelity and know Him not, either because they have never had the glad tidings preached to them, or having had the Gospel message delivered to them, they have ungratefully rejected it. Even unto these He gives sufficient grace, at least remotely and mediately, to arrive at faith, and so by degrees to gain eternal salvation. For, Our Lord speaking of those pagan nations and of those Jews who should hereafter hear the preaching of the Apostles, and who should not accept their teaching says: 'Whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your words, amen I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!'[2] Now, we may ask, why should it be more tolerable for those wicked cities than for the people who reject the Gospel, unless interior grace, without which man can do nothing in the supernatural order, is given to those who harden their hearts against it and withhold their wills from doing that unto which it is urging them? It is rational, therefore, to conclude that all who spurned the Gospel, had the grace to embrace it offered to them, and that they would not accept it.

But what shall we say of those who have never heard the glad tidings, but who live in the darkness of paganism

[1] Rom. ii. 4, 5. [2] St. Matt. x. 14, 15.

unconscious of the light which is pouring its noonday brightness upon the world? Does God give to these also a sufficiency of grace to enable them to win the crown of life? There can be no doubt that the riches of His bounty, and the heat of His charity, and the compassion of His far-reaching love, find their way even unto these poor benighted beings, and give them sufficient aid to lead them to salvation: 'Oh how good,' exclaims the Wise Man, 'is Thy Spirit, O Lord, in all things, and therefore Thou chastisest them that err' (that is the pagans), 'and admonishest them, and speakest to them concerning the things wherein they offend, that, leaving their wickedness, they may believe in Thee, O Lord?'[1] In what way does God speak to and admonish pagans? He does not appear to them face to face; He does not send them prophets, as He sent them to the Jews of old; nor does He work signs and wonders before their eyes to lead them to Himself. No; He warns them, and admonishes them by His interior grace, which stirs them up to reflect upon and to find out that great First Cause, Who called into being the world around them and themselves; it urges them to keep the natural law which is written in their hearts, and by its observance to pay Him such a worship, and to lead such a life, as will ensure them everlasting happiness.

In what we have said thus far, there is not any real difficulty in understanding and seeing that God does all that is necessary, to provide for the salvation of men. But there is some considerable difficulty in clearly apprehending how it can be that His goodness is equally great and equally far-reaching, when we come to consider the case of infants who either die without baptism, or before they come into the world, and who, at the first glance, seem to be hardly dealt with, inasmuch as they appear to have no chance afforded them of obtaining the great end for which God destines all men. Their case, however, is not so harsh as, from a superficial examination of it, we might be led to suppose; for, God provides for them also the remedies of

[1] Wisd. xii. 1, 2.

salvation, just as He provides them for His other children, and does all that is necessary and sufficient to secure their eternal well-being.

A little reflection upon the economy of God in the government of the world will make this matter more clear to us. It must be borne in mind that He is the universal Ruler, the first cause of all things. Yet, though His authority and power are everywhere and in all things supreme, it has pleased Him to admit into the ruling of His world a multitude of secondary causes which carry into effect His goodwill and pleasure. If they are material and irrational, they do this with the never-failing regularity and unerring accuracy of some cunningly contrived piece of mechanism; but if, as in the case of man, they are causes endowed with free-will, either they may or they may not do so. If they be good and virtuous, they will carry out the designs of God. If they be not, employing their free-will to rebel against Him, to a certain extent and as long as He suffers them, they will be able to mar His work and to frustrate His designs. How such a thing should be, is a mystery; but that it is so is beyond all doubt. It is enough for us to know that such is His will, Who can do all things. When, therefore, Almighty God has prepared and furnished the means for procuring the salvation of His creatures, He has sufficiently provided them with that with which they may attain their end. If they do not attain it, the fault is not to be laid upon Him, but upon those secondary causes which fail to carry out His will, by not making use of the means put into their power for that purpose—through malice, or through forgetfulness, or through neglect, if they are rational causes; through some defect if they are material causes, with the mode of the operation of which Almighty God does not usually interfere.

An example will, perhaps, enable us to throw more light upon what we mean. When, for instance, the Civil Power, at the urgent request of many and influential public men, graciously determines not to carry out the extreme penalty

of the law, in the case of some criminal who has been condemned to death, it despatches a reprieve by the hand of some trusty messenger to the gaol in which the criminal lies awaiting execution. But while the envoy is hurrying onwards, some unforeseen accident may prevent him from arriving in time. His carriage, perhaps, breaks down, or he loses his way, or he is killed by an enemy, and thus the benevolent intention of the Ruling Power is frustrated. It is evident that no fault can be laid to its charge on the score of the criminal's death; because it exerted its power to save him, and provided the means by which his death might have been averted. These failed only in their application through the fault of secondary causes, commissioned to carry them into effect.

It is thus with God. He supplies to infants those graces which should secure for them eternal salvation, if the secondary causes, to which He intrusts the application of those graces, would carry out His designs. It is evident, therefore, that as far as it depends upon Him, the necessary means for salvation are sufficiently supplied to all those whom He sincerely wishes to be saved, and for whom He poured out His most precious blood. But who will dare to say that God does not indirectly wish to save those infants who die without baptism? or that He did not die for their salvation? St. Augustine, when commenting upon that text of St. Paul in which the Apostle says, 'God will have all men to be saved,'[1] asks this question: 'Shall little children, then, be excluded from those who are termed "men," in order that they may not belong to those of whom the Apostle says, "will have *all men* to be saved"? Will anyone be rash enough to say that Christ did not die for them? If so, he must be prepared to maintain that He did not die for all who fell in the person of Adam.'[2] Moreover, Our Lord instituted the sacrament of baptism for their salvation, as well as for the salvation of those who have the use of reason, and who are able to appreciate the magnitude of the benefit. It is a sacrament that is

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 4. [2] Lib. IV. Contra Julian, c. 8.

the easiest to be applied, since anyone may administer it, and its matter is common water, which is to be found everywhere. Moreover, He rouses up the consciences of men, and makes them eager to administer it, both by precepts and by severe threats of punishment if they fail through malice or through culpable neglect to comply with His injunctions. Therefore, Almighty God has sufficiently provided for infants, a remedy which is necessary for them unto eternal salvation.

To those who do not reflect, or who take but a superficial view of the matter, it will seem, no doubt, that God does not do all that He might, in order to ensure children being baptised, because hindrances, which no human skill is able to remove, often prevent their reception of this sacrament. But this does not in the least degree weaken either the force or the truth of our proposition. For, it is the order of nature, instituted by God, that by a general law children are duly born into the world. Consequently, it is God's own law, not only that they should be born, but also that they should be brought to baptism. As often, therefore, as they either come into the world dead, or, though having come into the world alive, nevertheless fail to receive the regenerating waters of baptism, the fault lies not upon God, the universal or general Ruler, but upon some more general, secondary cause, the order of which God, as the universal Ruler, is not bound to invert. For, the world is not ruled by miraculous interpositions of Almighty power, or by the suspension of ordinary laws—except, indeed at rare intervals, and in particular cases—but by the equable and uniform application of those general laws, by which it has pleased Him to regulate and guide its movements even in the minutest details.

Therefore, Our good God is rich in mercy and grace to all mankind. Being willing that none should perish, He provides for all a sufficiency of grace to enable them to win that glorious destiny for which they are created. This He offers to them, and excites their wills to accept; but He does not *force* it upon them. Good and evil, life and

death, are before them. They may stretch forth their hands to which they please, and what they choose shall be given to them. It is theirs by free election. No one, therefore, can fasten the blame of his destruction upon God. Each will see, when standing in the presence of the Sun of Justice, in Whose light no falsehood can abide, that nothing was wanting to him, on the part of God, but that all the fault lay with his own infirmity of will, which he would not strengthen by the aid offered to him by God, lest, if he should do so, he should not taste of the poisonous fruit of sin. The just man will see that sufficient grace was given to him, to become still more just and perfect; the sinner, to rise from his sins; the infidel, to come to the true faith; and all will confess that God did what was necessary to save them. He will turn to them and say: 'What more was there that I ought to have done to My vineyard, and have not done it?' Then the whole host of the reprobate will be forced to cry out: 'There was naught more that Thou couldst have done to save us; our perdition is entirely the work of our own hands.' Therefore, when He shall turn to them, and shall pass the sentence of endless death upon them, saying: 'Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire!' their only answer will be: 'Thou art just, O Lord! and Thy judgment is right; for we were able not to have transgressed, and yet we did transgress; we were able not to have done evil, and yet we did it. Justly, therefore, are we thrust forth into that region of exterior darkness, where our worm shall never die, nor shall our fire be ever extinguished.'

## CHAPTER XIX.

### *HABITUAL GRACE.*

HAVING explained, in as brief and popular a manner as is consistent with so difficult a subject, the necessity, the nature, and the distribution of 'actual grace,' or of what, in other words, we may define to be a transient aid bestowed by God upon the soul, enabling it to conquer its enemies and to win its eternal crown, we must now proceed to view grace from another standpoint, whence it must be regarded no longer as a transient act, but as a permanent habit. Our purpose, therefore, in the present chapter, is to examine into the nature and the effects of habitual grace, also to inquire into the dispositions requisite, on the part of the soul, for the profitable reception of it.

Some of Luther's adherents, and all those who follow the principles of Calvin, reject the idea that there is, in the grace bestowed by Almighty God upon the just, anything permanent or habitual. According to their teaching, grace does not impart any internal sanctity or holiness. It produces no other effect upon the soul than that of causing it to appear in the sight of God clothed with the merits of Christ, as Jacob was clothed with the skins which deceived the fading sight and the benumbed sense of the aged patriarch and made him believe that his younger son was his first-born Esau. Those merits, however, are no more the merits of the men to whom it may please God to impute them, than were the skins of the kids, wherewith the craft of Rebecca had concealed the neck and the hands of Jacob, his own natural covering. They serve simply as a cloak to hide from the all-holy eyes of God, the filthiness and the

deformity of sin. Consequently, according to this horrible and revolting doctrine, the man who is said to be just is not really just, he is like a whited sepulchre, outwardly pure and beautiful, but within full of corruption and of all filthiness.

The doctrine of the Catholic Church teaches the very opposite to this, and maintains that habitual grace is an internal gift of God, which inheres in the soul and permanently abides with us. With this idea of grace deeply imprinted upon his mind, the great Apostle urges the Corinthians to respect and honour their mortal bodies, because of the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit: 'Know ye not,' he asks, 'that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?'[1] St. John lays down the principle 'that all those who are born of God do not commit sin, because His seed abideth in them.'[2] Now all interpreters who have explained these passages take 'the Spirit of God,' and 'the seed of God,' to mean sanctifying grace; so that, according to the mind of the Church, which has accepted and sanctioned their exposition, grace *dwells* in us, and we are made holy by an internal gift which abides in our souls.

How consonant with right reason this conclusion is, will be evident if we consider how St. Paul likens the mode by which men were made sinners, to that by which they are made just: 'As by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one man many shall be made just.'[3] From these words it is quite legitimate to infer that, as the stain contracted by the rebellion of our first parents is something internal, habitual, and permanent, so also should the justice, acquired through the obedience of Jesus Christ, be an internal, habitual, and permanent gift. This was evidently the idea of divine grace which was in the mind of Our Lord, when He addressed the Apostles after His last supper, and insisted so strongly upon the necessity for union with Himself, through grace and charity. He tells them that they are

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 16. [2] 1. John iii. 9. [3] Rom. v. 19.

*clean* by reason of the word which He had spoken to them, and adds: 'Abide in Me and I will abide in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches.'[1] In these words He tells them, as plainly as language can convey an idea to the mind, that the means by which they are able to bring forth the supernatural fruits of a holy life, rich in good works, is by a principle of life intrinsically communicated to them, which life becomes their own, just as the life of the tree becomes the life of the branch which has either been engrafted upon, or which has sprung naturally from the parent stock.

Hence the Church has branded with her anathema all those who shall say or shall teach that men are made just by the simple *imputation* of the justice of Christ, or that their sins are forgiven without that grace and that charity which are poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit.[2] Most just is her condemnation, for the sound common-sense of even an averagely well-educated man will tell him that Almighty God cannot love anyone unless there is in him something really worthy of His love; because love bestowed upon anything undeserving of it is an irrational love. Now we know that God *does* love the just man, and therefore we conclude that there must be in his soul something deserving of so ineffable a favour, and that that something can be nothing else than habitual grace, infused by the infinite mercy of God, and abiding in the soul, really, intrinsically, and in a permanent manner. Hence, it is evident that it is essential to habitual grace to be internal, real, and always abiding in the soul.

Another condition which will serve to throw still greater light upon its nature, is what we may call its individuality, or its distinct and separate existence from the habits of charity, with which the Scotist school of theology was inclined to confound it, teaching that grace and charity are only *virtually*, but not *actually* distinct from each other;

[1] St. John xv. 5. [2] Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., Can. 11.

that is to say, they are distinct, when regarded in their different duties, offices, and effects, but are nevertheless in reality one and the same. If this were true, it would undoubtedly never have occurred to the Apostle to speak of grace as being something quite distinct from charity. He would have contented himself with desiring that the charity of God might burn bright in the hearts of the faithful, and keep them in union with Jesus Christ. But on looking at the concluding verses of his second Epistle to the Corinthians, we find that he evidently considered habitual grace to be altogether distinct from charity, for he says: The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.'[1] It is clear from these words that grace is made as distinct from charity, as is the communication of the Holy Spirit; but the Holy Spirit, Who is given to us with grace, is really distinct from it, and therefore, by a parity of reasoning, we must conclude that grace also is distinct from charity. In another place, the Apostle says: 'Now the grace of Our Lord hath abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Jesus Christ.'[2] As, in the preceding instance, he makes grace differ from charity, so also in this he makes it differ from faith and love; but all admit that faith is really distinct from habitual grace, and therefore, to be logical, we must admit that grace differs from love or charity.

Having learnt, from what has been said thus far, that habitual grace is an internal, vivifying principle, inhering in the soul and permanently remaining with it; and also, that it must not be confounded with any of the other virtues, but that it has a separate existence—or, as we have said, an individuality of its own—we may next proceed to consider what are the effects which this gift of God produces in the soul.

These effects are two in number; namely, justification and merit. Of justification we will speak at once, and will endeavour to explain its nature and the dispositions

[1] 2 Cor. xiii. 13. [2] 1 Tim. i. 14.

requisite for its attainment; but our remarks upon merit must be reserved for a separate chapter.

In the Sacred Scriptures the word *justification* has four significations: sometimes it is taken to mean the Law which teaches justice; as David in the Psalm says: 'Teach me Thy justifications;'[1] sometimes for that declaration of justice, by which an accused person is proclaimed to be innocent; it has this signification in the book of Proverbs: 'He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, both are abominable before God.'[2] Again; in some passages it means an increase of justice, as when St. John, in the Apocalypse, says: 'He that is just, let him be justified still.'[3] Lastly, it is taken to signify the acquisition of justice, as in the text: 'Being justified freely by His grace.'[4] According to Calvin and his followers, justification means nothing more than a declaration of acquittal from guilt. But by this acquittal they do not, by any means, teach that the sins of him who is pronounced to be just are *blotted out* or taken away, but only that they are *covered* by the justice of Christ; and because they are thus covered and hidden from the eyes of God, they are not imputed to those who have been guilty of them. They make justification, therefore, to consist, not in any internal renovation or purification of soul, but only in the non-imputation of the manifold crimes and offences of which a sinner has been guilty in a long course of years.

The Catholic Church, however, has always taken justification to mean the acquisition of justice. She teaches that sin is really and truly blotted out, and that the soul is interiorly sanctified by the abiding presence within it of a quality which, so to speak, has become part and parcel of itself. This doctrine has not been put forth by her as a matter about which there can be two opinions; she has defined it to be of faith. For, the Council of Trent, when treating of original sin, declared that it is wholly blotted out by baptism. Now, that which is true

[1] Ps. cxviii. 26. [2] Prov. xvii. 15. [3] Apoc. xxii. 11.
[4] Rom. iii. 24.

of Adam's sin, is likewise true of all sin; for, if one sin is blotted out and not simply covered over, then all sins may be blotted out, and not merely hidden with the cloak of Our Lord's merits. This dogmatic decision is in keeping with the teaching of the Divine Scriptures which represent God to us as blotting out our sins: 'I am He that blot out thy iniquities for My own sake.'[1] In the next chapter the Prophet makes him say; 'I have blotted out thy iniquities as a cloud, and thy sins as a mist.'[2] 'Who is a God like to Thee,' asks the Prophet Micheas, 'Who takest away iniquities? He will put away our iniquities and will cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea.'[3] With the self-same conviction in his heart, the Baptist, when he saw Our Lord coming to the river, cried out: 'Behold the Lamb of God! Behold Him Who taketh away the sins of the world!'[4] From these and from many other passages which need not be cited, it is quite manifest that the inspired Writers never contemplated the idea of the just carrying about with them the hideous filth and corruption of sin, shrouded from sight beneath the spotless garment of Christ's resplendent merits.

Independently of scriptural authority, even common-sense revolts against a notion so repugnant to right reason, as that, forsooth, an all-holy and all-seeing God is to be cheated into the belief of the sanctity of His creature, because that creature is supposed to be clothed in the virtues and the merits of His divine Son! Besides, even if, for the sake of argument, we were to admit so palpable an absurdity as that a man should be at one and the same time a sinner and a just man in the sight of God, it would be because we pretended to believe either that God cannot blot out our sins, or that He is unwilling to do so. But neither of these suppositions is admissible. We cannot grant the first; for, we should be putting a limit to the power of God, and thereby depriving Him of one of His essential attributes. We cannot admit the second, for,

[1] Isai. xliii. 25. [2] Isai. xliv. 22. [3] Mich. vii. 18, 19.
[4] St. John i. 29.

that would be to gainsay the word of God, Who has so often promised to take away the sinner's guilt.

Moreover, if sin were not altogether blotted out when an impious man is justified, but if it still remained in him, it would follow that he had not truly risen from the death of sin, and that he had not been perfectly washed and cleansed from its corruption. But to maintain any such thing would be directly to contradict the express teaching of the Holy Scriptures; for, St. John says: 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren;'[1] and the Psalmist; 'Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow;[2] and the Prophet Ezechiel, speaking in the person of God, says: I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness.'[3]

The purification from sin which takes place in the justification of the impious is not the only effect of God's Almighty hand. For, justification is not simply a washing away of the filth of sin; it is a *renovation* of the interior man, effected by the permanent abiding within him of sanctifying grace. This is proclaimed in precise terms by the Prophet Ezechiel, when he says: 'You shall be cleansed from all your filthiness, and I will give you a *new* heart, and put a *new* spirit within you.'[4] St. Paul teaches the same truth when he tells the Corinthians that they are not only washed clean from their sins, but sanctified,[5] and exhorts the Ephesians to aim at the same happy state in the words: 'Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth.'[6] A further guarantee that this internal renovation does actually take place, may be inferred from the fact that justification does not simply free us from the peril of falling into the flames of hell; it does something more; it entitles us to the possession of eternal life. Now, to have had our sins remitted, would shelter us from the danger of hell fire; but this remission would not

[1] 1. St. John iii. 14. [2] Ps. l. 9. [3] Ezech. xxxvi. 25.
[4] Ezech. xxxvi. 26. [5] 1 Cor. vi. 11. [6] Ephes. iv. 23, 24.

give us a right to the everlasting joys of heaven, nor would it raise us to the supernatural order. For these favours there is requisite a further grace, which is the internal renovation of which we are speaking. It is wrought in the soul by the presence there of habitual, sanctifying grace.

In confirmation of this conclusion we may add that it is impossible for anyone to receive what theologians call a new, positive, intrinsic form, such as is given by sanctifying grace—which makes a man just instead of being unjust, the friend of God instead of His enemy, the heir to eternal life instead of the bond-slave of the devil—without at the same time undergoing a true change within himself; and therefore, we conclude that the influx of sanctifying grace upon the soul, effects within it a complete renovation of the internal man, by which the old man is put off, and there is put on a new man who is created according to God in holiness, and justice, and truth.

However, to be transformed into the child of God and constituted heir to an eternal kingdom, there are requisite certain dispositions, the nature of which we will now endeavour to explain as briefly and as clearly as may be. It will be remembered, as a matter of course, that we speak of adults only, for, in the case of infants who are justified by the reception of baptism, no personal dispositions are required, inasmuch as infants being without the use of reason, are incapable of any. Speaking of adults, we may say, at the outset, that they are unable, by the force of nature only, to prepare themselves for justification. In the next place, it is of faith that in their case *some* dispositions are requisite, and that these dispositions are not restricted to faith only; for, the Council of Trent anathematises anyone who shall dare to say that, in order to gain the grace of justification, it is in no way necessary for a man to be prepared and disposed by the motion of his will, but that belief in the all-sufficing atonement is enough![1] This truth enunciated by the Council is based upon the teaching of the Holy Scriptures; for, out of numberless passages which

[1] Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., Can. 9.

might be adduced, let us consider but tha text of Isaias in which Almighty God, addressing His people by the mouth of His Prophet, says: 'Be converted to Me, and you shall be saved;'[1] and again, speaking to the same purpose by the Prophet Zacharias, He says: 'Turn ye to Me, and I will turn to you.'[2] What do these passages teach us? They tell us, as plainly as words can speak, that faith alone will not suffice for the justification of the impious. This conversion to God, this turning to Him, indicates that there is in that act something more than bare belief. It shows us that there is in that which precedes justification, a motion of the human will, without which God will not look upon man to restore him to His grace and favour. Hence that saying of the Wisest of Men: 'It is the part of man to prepare the soul,'[3] that is to say, aided by the power of God, Who touches the heart by His divine grace. This preparation is but reasonable; for, as man by sinning, of his own free will turns away from God, so it is but just that he should not be reconciled, unless he first freely turn to Him again.

It is evident, therefore, that other dispositions besides faith are required for justification. Nevertheless, faith comes first, as the basis or foundation of the rest. But this faith is not what is called 'the faith of the promises,' by which we believe that God's pledge to give us the gratuitous pardon of our sins, through the merits of Christ, is true. It must be what is called 'historical or dogmatic faith,' or that assent which our mind gives to all that has been divinely revealed. This is the faith which the Council of Trent[4] teaches us is necessary as a first disposition for justification; and a glance through the Sacred Writings will be enough to convince us that it is of such faith they speak when they tell us what is requisite for gaining eternal life: 'Preach the Gospel,' says Our divine Lord, 'to every living creature; he that believeth (all things contained in it) shall be saved.'[5]

[1] Isai. xlv. 22. [2] Zach. i. 3.
[3] Prov. xvi. 1. [4] Consil. Third., Rees. VI., Can 12. [5] St. Mark xvi. 15.

St John, in the last chapter but one of his Gospel, enunciates the same truth; 'These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.'[1] Of much the same import are St. Paul's words to the Romans when he says; 'This is the word of faith which we preach; for, if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.'[2] Now, it is evident, we think, both from the words of these texts and from the whole drift of the chapters whence they are taken, that the faith spoken of is that dogmatic faith which embraces all things revealed by God. It is that faith, and that faith only, that *disposes* the soul of man to receive justification. For, it is clear, we should imagine, to the meanest intelligence, that a faith which justifies should precede the act of justification; just as the water which cleanses is present before the actual ablution which removes all stain and impurities. Now, the faith of the promises does not go before justification. It follows it. Therefore, it cannot be a *disposing* cause to justification; for, belief in the promises is that by which a man is fully persuaded that through the merits of Christ all his sins have been forgiven. It is evident, therefore, that such a faith as this does not precede, it follows justification; for, the object of that faith is not a pardon to be granted, but one which has already been bestowed.

Other dispositions, however, besides faith, are requisite for justification. This also is a part of Catholic belief, which cannot be called in question, for, the Council of Trent has anathematised anyone who shall maintain that man is justified by faith only, to the exclusion of other dispositions which co-operate with it, in the justification of the impious.[3] In upholding this truth, the Fathers were but defending the Apostolic teaching, and delivering to us the message which had been handed down to them. For, St. James had written: 'What shall it profit, my brethren,

[1] St. John xx. 41. [2] Rom, x. 8, 9. [3] Sess. VI., Can. 9.

if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him? By works a man is justified, and not by faith only. For, as a body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.'[1]

These words are so luminous and so incontrovertible in proving the Catholic doctrine, that Luther was forced to reject as apocryphal the whole Epistle in which they are found in order that he might be able, with at least some show of reason, to hold the position which he had taken up. This is a rather summary way of shelving a difficulty; but nevertheless, it is most ineffectual, for many other books of Scripture would have to be set aside for the same reason; because in them the other four supernatural acts, mentioned by the Council as being requisite for justification, are clearly pointed out and insisted upon. According to the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, no man can become just, unless the *fear* of God first enters his heart: 'The fear of the Lord,' he says, 'driveth out sin: for, he that is without fear cannot be justified.'[2] The Wise Man speaks of *hope* as conducing to justification, when he says: 'He that trusteth (that is hopeth) in the Lord shall be healed;'[3] and St. Paul adds: 'We are saved by hope.'[4] St. John deems it impossible to be a friend of God without that *love* by which a man begins to love God as the fountain of all justice—'He that loveth not, abideth in death.'[5]

Lastly, the acts of the virtue of *Penance* are put forward as a necessary condition, without which it is impossible to be cleansed from the filth of sin, and to receive the Spirit of God. For, when the crowds who, on the day of Pentecost, listened to the soul-stirring words of St. Peter, asked him what they had to do to be saved, he answered: 'Do penance, and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.'[6] What other answer to such a question could he make, who had no doubt heard

[1] St. James ii. 14, 24, 26. [2] Ecclus. 1. 27. [3] Prov. xxxviii. 15.
[4] Rom. viii. 24. [5] 1 St. John iii. 14. [6] Acts ii. 38.

from the lips of the divine Teacher those memorable words: 'Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish'?[1] It is false, therefore, to assert that no other disposition is requisite for justification, except that faith in the promises of Christ, by which we feel assured that He has forgiven our manifold sins; for, it is contradicted by our reason, by the Scriptures, and by the authoritative voice of the Church.

Therefore, we cannot better draw to a close these remarks upon habitual grace, than by briefly recapitulating what they have taught us about its nature, its effects, and the dispositions requisite to gain that justification, which is the outcome of its presence in the soul.

Habitual grace is an internal gift of God, inhering permanently in the soul, and it is distinct from the habit of charity with which some teachers have wished to confound it.

Its principal effect, to the consideration of which our remarks have been directed, is the justification of him who receives it, or the acquisition by him of that sanctity which makes him pleasing to God, by blotting out his sins and by renovating his spiritual nature.

For this we saw that certain predisposing qualifications are necessary, first among which is that historical or dogmatic faith, by which we give our assent to the whole body of revealed truth, whether it is made known to us through the pages of the Sacred Scriptures, or is proposed to us by the teaching of the Church. In addition to this, the voice of the Church bids us add fear, which is the beginning of wisdom; hope, whereby St. Paul tells us that we are saved; love, without which we abide in death; and salutary penance, so necessary for our sinful race, that God Himself has declared that unless we give ourselves up to its bitter but healthful exercise, we shall all perish.

[1] St. Luke xiii. 3.

## CHAPTER XX.

### *PROPERTIES OF HABITUAL GRACE.*

In order to give some show of coherence to their system, the Lutherans were obliged to attribute to grace certain qualities, some of which flow with logical sequence from it, but others have no more relationship with it than that which the arbitrary judgment of these men has thought fit to assign. Of the first kind is their belief that grace is equal in all men without exception. For, if grace and the justification consequent upon it, be nothing more than the imputation of the merits of Our Lord, it will follow that the graces bestowed upon each man are equal, inasmuch as they are the graces of Christ. Of the second kind are the assertions that grace once received can never be lost, and that the person who is thus favoured by God may be sure, with the certainty of divine faith, that he is justified from his sins. Against these assertions the Church has formulated a decree, denying and condemning the falsehood which they enunciate, and teaching that grace is unequal in each man; that it may be lost; and that no one without a divine revelation can know with the certainty of faith that he has been justified from sin.

Each of these positions will need to be established and defended, and this shall be our aim in the few considerations which we are about to lay before the reader.

The teaching of the Catholic Church, as we have already seen, is that grace is given to man, not as to an inert, irrational mass, upon which God showers His favours, just as He pours forth His fertilising rain upon the senseless earth, but to a being endowed with an intelligence and a

will, both which must be exerted and made to concur with the divine movement, in order that man may accept and make grace and justification his own. It will follow, therefore, that in proportion to the completeness with which the will concurs with God, will be the magnitude of the grace received. For, we are taught that the grace purchased for us by God may be compared and it is compared in Scripture, to an open fountain, whence he who wills may draw as much as he pleases. He who brings the largest vessel, will carry away the most copious draughts. It will follow, therefore, from this, that grace is not equal in each of us, for the will power in one man differs in depth and in intensity of purpose from the will power in another. He, therefore, who concurs most with the moving and preventing grace of God, will receive from the hand of God a greater amount of grace; and in proportion to the magnitude of the grace received will be his favour with God. He will be more pleasing in His eyes, and he will be accounted by Him greater and nobler than is one who has not equally corresponded with the operations of grace in his soul. Hence, it is not surprising to find that the Sacred Scriptures speak in the most unmistakable terms of the inequality of grace in different men, and of the possibility of increasing the store which one may have already received from the treasures of God. When Our Lord pronounced upon the saintly Baptist that splendid eulogy which the embassy from John gave Him an occasion to utter, He concluded His words with this weighty sentence: 'There hath not arisen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist.'[1] These words did not refer to his dignity or to his office, for, many of the Prophets had the self-same mission to perform, only at an earlier date, but to the grace and the sanctity which made his life so rich in examples of the loftiest virtue.

Therefore, upon the authority of Him Whose word no one will gainsay, we know that one man may be holier than another. As a further proof of this truth, we gather from

[1] St. Matt. xi. 11.

Holy Writ that grace received is capable of still greater increase; for, we are encourged by its teaching to strive to augment the store which we may already possess: 'Be not afraid, says the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, 'to be justified even unto death (that is, to increase in justice).[1] St. Peter evidently holds the same view, since he writes to his converts: 'Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God.'[2] Also, the Angel who is represented in the Apocalypse as speaking to St. John, seems to give utterance to a similar exhortation when he says: 'He that is just, let him be justified still.'[3] If, then, the grace received from the bounty of God be capable of increase, it will follow, as a natural consequence, that a more plentiful store of it may be in the soul of one man than there is in the soul of another. The reason of this is manifest from the words of the Sacred Text; for, the inspired volume clearly points out that this increase is owing to the personal efforts of individuals in corresponding with God's goodness, by removing obstacles and by daily struggling to advance to a higher degree of holiness than is that in which they are already living. Hence, the Church condemns all those who teach that the justice received from God is not preserved and even increased by means of good works; or who maintain that these good works are themselves the fruit or the sign of justification received, and not the cause of its increase.'[4] Also, our reason tells us that the grace of God cannot be equal in all men, from the simple fact that Our Lord said to His Apostles: 'In my Father's house there are many mansions,'[5] that is, many different degrees of glory; and that St. Paul formulated the same truth in the well-known passage in which he says: 'As star differeth from star in glory, so also shall the faithful differ from one another in the glory of the life to come.'[6] Now, if there is to be inequality in the degrees of the glory wherewith God shall reward His elect, there must of necessity be inequality also in that for which He will

[1] Ecclus. xviii. 22. [2] 2 Pet. iii. 18. [3] Apocal. xxii. 11,
[4] Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., Can. 24. [5] St. John xiv. 2. [6] 1 Cor. xv. 41.

crown them. What is that? By the admission of all it is nothing but His own divine grace which, as by a natural law, He crowns with eternal glory; for, glory succeeds to grace, and grace is the seed of glory.

From the teaching of the Sacred Scriptures, and from the dogmatic pronouncements of the Church, it is evident, then, that grace is not equal in all men, but one has more, another less; and he that has more, as well as he that has less, may increase his store by the faithful stewardship of that which God has thought fit to bestow upon him. It will follow from this that any neglect of or any contempt for this gift of God is an occasion of its diminution or of its loss. For, if God rewards the faithful husbandry of His grace by an increase of favour, it is natural to conclude that He will also punish the prodigal abuse of it, by a sensible decrease, or by a total withdrawal of His bounty. It is, therefore, only rational and of a piece with the Catholic system of grace to maintain that by a lapse into mortal sin, the justification acquired by grace may be lost and lost utterly if the sinner should unhappily die in his sin.

This is the teaching of the Prophet Ezechiel who says: 'When a just man turneth away from his justice and committeth iniquity, he shall die therein: in the injustice he hath wrought he shall die.'[1] Hence, Our Lord, Who spoke to St. John in vision, bade him say to the Bishop of the Church of Philadelphia: 'Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown,'[2] for, He knew how easily men lose that precious treasure, and for what worthless dross they are ready to barter it away. St. Paul was so keenly alive to this danger that he bids the Philippians 'work out their salvation with fear and trembling.'[3] Nay, so little security did he feel of his own ability to keep his feet from stumbling in the steep, narrow way, that he took extraordinary precautions to prevent so terrible a calamity: 'I chastise my body and bring it into subjection; lest, perhaps, when I have

[1] Ezech. xviii. 26. [2] Apocal. iii. 11. [3] Philip. ii. 12.

preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.'[1]

Is that which the Apostle dreaded a matter of so rare occurrence in the history of the Old and of the New Dispensation, as to make us deem his precautions superfluous? With how many wrecks of great and noble characters do we meet as we travel along the shore of time! We cannot conceive it possible that God should have chosen these men and should have enriched them with so many extraordinary gifts and graces, had they not been in His favour at the time of their election. Yet they fell away from the high estate to which He had raised them and perished miserably, blasted and blighted by His retributive justice for their criminal abuse of and their contempt for the most sacred and most precious gifts that in His bounty He had deigned to bestow upon them. To the Prophet Samuel He pointed out Saul as the man whom He had chosen to rule His people. The sacred oil of unction was poured upon his head, and the Spirit of God descended upon him to guide and direct him in the weighty charge committed to his care. There can be no doubt then, that, had he corresponded with these first favours of God and brought his will into humble submission to God's will, he would never have fallen away. He did not do so. He abused the grace of God; and because he had first rejected the Lord, the Lord in His turn rejected him. An evil spirit took possession of his heart. He went from bad to worse, till he ended his evil career upon Mount Gelboe, by falling upon his sword and putting an end to his wretched life.

David, who succeeded him in the kingdom, was, in his early years, full of God's sanctifying grace; he was a man according to God's own heart; and yet he also fell away from the justice which he had acquired, and he would have become a reprobate but for his sincere repentance.

Judas, the Apostle, is another case in point. Jesus Christ, the searcher of hearts, selected him to be an

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Apostle; and, as it is an axiom among theologians that God never appoints anyone to any office or to any position of trust without at the same time giving him all the graces and the endowments necessary for its right administration, we may take it for granted that he was all that could be desired, and that like the other Apostles, he would have become a pillar in the Church of God had he but resisted the temptations of the devil and corresponded with the graces given to him. He did not do so; and his name has become a byword among men and a synonym for treachery, the most foul and abominable of which it is possible for one man to be guilty towards another.

But why multiply examples? We have but to look back through the history of the Church and of the world, and we shall meet with similar instances of men who, having begun well, have ended ill, that is to say, have fallen away utterly from the grace by which they were made pleasing in the eyes of God, and heirs of His eternal kingdom, and have become reprobates, whose fate will serve to humble and to warn us as we climb the rugged path which leads up heavenwards. In this way their wretched fate will profit us, while at the same time it will serve to convince us that the justice which a man acquires by the grace of God, is not so fused into his spiritual nature as to be incapable of ever being separated from it by sin. For, if it is impossible to lose the justice of God by the transgression of His holy Law, of what use is it to impose upon us the precepts of that Law which, as the common-sense of everyone will admit, is supposed to bind us to the observance of them? Surely no one will be so bold, after what we have seen in the pages of Sacred Scripture and in the examples already adduced, as to maintain that the human will, by the imputation of justice, is so fixed in a species of necessity, that it is unable to change or to will anything except that which is in strict accordance with the divine will. To uphold a theory so evidently at variance with experience and with the teachings of the Catholic Church, is to render the enactments of the

Supreme Lawgiver ridiculous. He makes the observance of His Law binding upon the consciences of men, under the threat of eternal damnation; and thereby indicates to us that He supposes man to be able to reject and to transgress its ordinances, or to observe them, according as it may seem good to him. If this were not so, then God would be made the Author of a foolish and superfluous piece of legislation, by binding men, under the severest penalties, to the observance of laws which it is not in their power to transgress.

That this is the only true, the only rational theory of grace, becomes still more apparent when we consider the consequences which flow from the doctrine propounded by Luther and upheld by his followers. For, if we admit that divine grace bestowed by God can never be lost by the recipient, then the famous saying of Luther must be accepted by us as a logical consequence: 'Sin boldly,' said he, 'but believe more firmly still, and a hundred murders, a thousand filthy deeds, will not harm thee.' What other conclusion can a man draw who is taught to believe that he has abiding in him the justice of Christ, as truly and as really as if the Lord Himself had invested him with it; who believes that he will certainly persevere; that he is destined with absolute certainty to be saved; and that his sins, however great and grievous they may be, are not imputed to him, on account of his faith in Jesus Christ? He may fall into the sins of rebellion, murder, and adultery, but nevertheless he is sure that he will neither totally or finally fall away, nor be able to fall away, from the fatherly love of God and from His grace.[1]

As for the certainty of being in the state of grace and of being justified, the Catholic Church teaches that it is impossible to obtain that certainty, unless we are assured of it by a special revelation from God. Even if we were, for the moment, to set aside this teaching of the Church, and to search for this dogma in the pages of the Sacred Scriptures only, or in the writings of those eminent and

[1] Grotius: Discuss. Apolog. Andreæ Riveti.

learned men who have made those pages the special study of their lives, this is the conclusion at which we should arrive. For, in the book of Ecclesiastes, we read: 'There are great men and wise men, and their works are in the hands of God: and yet man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or of hatred, but all things are kept uncertain for the time to come.'[1] Commenting on this passage, St. Jerome says: 'I find, indeed, that the works of the just are in the hands of God; and yet I am aware that they are unable to tell whether they are loved by God or not; for, they must remain in doubt whether the afflictions which they are obliged to endure are sent to them as a probation or as a punishment.' In corroboration both of this startling text, and of the teaching of the great Father who commented upon it, we have the testimony of the Wisest of Men, who asks: 'Who can say, My heart is clean, I am pure from sin?'[2] St. Paul himself must have been thoroughly convinced that no one could venture upon so bold an affirmation, without some express revelation from God; for, speaking of himself, he says: 'I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord.'[3] From this fact, that it is God that has to determine whether we are justified or not, we may conclude that it is impossible to have the certainty of divine faith that we are justified in His eyes, 'Who even in His Angels discovered wickedness;'[4] unless He Who is able to give a sure judgment about our state shall condescend to make it known to us. Hence, the Council of Trent condemns all those who, without a special revelation from God as to the state of their souls, are bold enough to believe that they are certainly of the number of the predestined. In order to be of this happy number, it is not sufficient that there should be a promise given to us by God; something more is requisite, and that is our own conversion to God, and our worthy preparation for His heavenly gift. Nevertheless, even when a man has been converted to God

[1] Eccli. ix. 1, 2. [2] Prov. xx. 9. [3] 1 Cor. iv. 4.
[4] Job iv. 18.

and when he has duly prepared himself for the reception of God's favours, no revelation is, ordinarily speaking, made to him as to his state, nor can he be infallibly certain that he is truly converted to God; for, it must always be either more or less a matter of doubt whether the act of conversion is owing to grace or to concupiscence. Therefore it is that St. Gregory says: 'The mind of man always lies unto itself, and with regard to good, pretends to love that which it does not.'[1] Therefore we may, in conclusion, sum up in one brief sentence all that has been said about the properties of habitual grace. It is *unequal* in different persons, inasmuch as it is the result of co-operation with the divine aid on the part of men whose wills are unequal in power; it is not so *inherent and essential* to the state of justification as that it cannot be lost; nor is it possible for anyone who has received this gift from God *to be certain* of it with the certainty of divine faith, unless the gracious God from Whose bounty it flows is willing by a special revelation to make this known to the recipient. Such is the unvarying teaching of the Catholic Church concerning the properties of habitual grace.

[1] De Pastorali Cura, Pars I., Cap. 29.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### *MERIT.*

HABITUAL grace, besides making us just and holy in the sight of God, has another effect, which is to render our acts meritorious or worthy of some reward. If this reward is due to the work from some sort of justice, theologians call the merit, condign merit—'*meritum de condigno*;' if only from a certain becomingness, they call it congruous merit—'*meritum de congruo.*' On this, as on the other questions connected with divine grace, the so-called Reformers of the sixteenth century erred most egregiously. The very term *merit* was so hateful to them that they utterly rejected it, as savouring of that pharisaical pride which was so deservedly condemned and scorned by Our blessed Lord. Hence they taught that any work performed by man, no matter how holy and perfect he may be, is undeserving of any merit, as being vitiated by some stain or defect.[1]

In order, therefore, to meet and refute this heretical doctrine, we have, in the first place, to establish the existence of merit; then to point out the dispositions requisite for its attainment; and lastly, to state what is the object towards the acquisition of which merit is directed.

If there is one thing more than any other which the inspired Writers seem to take for granted, it is the existence in man's good works of that merit, which is denied with so great emphasis by Calvin and by his followers. They repeatedly represent God and the Apostles commissioned by Him to announce the good tidings of salvation to the world, as affirming that He will reward our good works, and

[1] Calvin: Instit., Lib, iii., Cap. 15.

that this reward is, in a certain way, justly due to them. Thus we have God Himself speaking in vision to Abraham and saying to him: 'I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great.'[1] Also, in order to encourage men to persevere in the hard ways of virtue, and to strive daily to increase in holiness, the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus proposes to them the reward with which God will repay them for their long suffering: 'Be not afraid,' he says, 'to be justified even to death, for the reward of the Lord continueth for ever.'[2] St. Paul enunciates this doctrine in terms still more express when he says to the Corinthians: 'Every man shall receive his own reward according to his labour.'[3] Now upon these various passages, and upon a multitude of others scattered throughout the pages of the Bible, we may argue thus: Everywhere in Holy Writ a reward is promised to good works; hence, there must be in them something deserving of recompense; that is to say, they have in them a certain *merit* which is worthy of being crowned, for, reward and merit are correlative, the existence of the one presupposing and requiring the existence of the other. If, then, Almighty God bestows a reward upon the works of the just, these works must be meritorious; and, therefore, the existence of merit in all such works is indisputable.

This is taken for granted in all those passages which teach that God actually does give a reward to meritorious works: 'All mercy,' says Ecclesiasticus, 'shall make a place for every man according to the merit of his works, and according to the wisdom of his sojournment.'[4] Our Lord speaks in similar terms when He says: 'The Son of Man will render to every man according to his works.'[5] Speaking to St. John, He says: Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to his works.'[6] Now, a reward given to works, a reward not bestowed as a gratuitous gift or favour, is nothing more or less than the paying of a debt; therefore, it argues, in the works for which it is given, the existence

[1] Gen. xv. 1. [2] Eccles. xviii. 22. [3] 1 Cor. iii. 8. [4] Eccles. xvi. 15. [5] St. Matt. xvi. 27. [6] Apoc. xxii. 12.

of merit. Such is the reasoning of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans.[1] In another Epistle writing to his disciple Timothy, he tells him that the reward which God has in store for himself personally is one which He will bestow in justice: I have fought the good fight; as to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me in that day.'[2] Writing to the Hebrews, he expresses the same doctrine when he says: 'God is not unjust, that He should forget your works.'[3] Hence, if the reward bestowed upon good works is given as a debt, and is paid by God out of a sort of justice, it is evident that the merit which theologians term condign—*meritum de condigno*—does really exist.

Having established its existence, our next duty is to inquire what are the conditions requisite to make it our own. As in merit there are three things to be considered—the man who merits, the meritorious work performed by him, and the person who rewards that work—it is natural that there should be certain conditions which affect merit under each of these heads.

For condign merit, two conditions are requisite on the part of him who merits. The first is that he should be just, that is to say, that he should be in the state of grace; the second, that he should be a living man, or what theologians call a '*homo viator*.' The state of grace is necessary for merit; because, just as life in man is the principle of physical action, so is grace in him the principle of spiritual action; for, grace is to his soul that which his soul is to his body, and as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it participates in the life of the tree, by being united to it, so a soul cannot share in any spiritual work, or derive any merit from that which it may do, unless by means of grace it is in union with God. This is the argument used by Jesus Christ to prove the necessity for union with Himself by grace, in order to do anything worthy of a supernatural reward: 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me.'[4] Now,

[1] Rom. iv. 4. [2] 2 Tim. iv. 7. [3] Heb. vi. 10. [4] St. John xv. 4.

man abides in Christ by means of this sanctifying grace. If that grace is lost by sin, man is no more capable of acquiring merit by his acts, than a withered branch snapped from its parent stock is capable of producing leaves and fruit. Hence the Church, in its dogmatic decree, when laying down the conditions for merit, says that 'those who merit must be united with Jesus Christ, as living members of His sacred body; for, since Our Lord continually infuses virtue into the just, as the head does into the members and the vine into its branches; and, as this virtue always goes before, accompanies, and follows all their works, they cannot by any means be pleasing to Him, except through this union by means of sanctifying grace.'[1] If this condition is wanting, nothing else can supply its place.

Hence, if a man were so full of pity for the miseries of his fellow-men as to distribute all his goods in order to relieve their necessities, and were to give up even his body to be burnt for their sakes, it would profit him nothing, unless he were also united with God by that charity which is the channel connecting his soul with the source of life and of spiritual action.[2] With good reason do we say this; for, without charity the creature is made hostile to the Creator, and being His enemy, it cannot merit eternal life, but it is worthy of eternal death. Moreover, that glorious life to come is the inheritance which the great Father of all bestows upon His sons. In order, therefore, to have any title to it, it is necessary that a man should have been adopted into the number of these sons by means of grace; without that adoption he is not a son at all, and if he is not a son, he cannot be an heir to the property which belongs to this heavenly Father.

Again; in order to merit, it is required not only that a man should be in the state of grace, but that he should be a living man, a wayfarer in this present life. For, if the world to come is the place of rewards, the abode of peace and of rest, then this present world must be the place of labour and of contest. Hence it will follow that when the

[1] Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., Cap. 16. [2] 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

period destined by God for labour and strife is over, it will no longer be possible to merit. This is clearly stated by Our blessed Lord in those well-known words which He spoke when urging men to diligence in the accomplishment of the task imposed upon them here below: 'The night cometh,' said He, 'when no man can work;'[1] that is to say, as the interpreters of Holy Writ explain the passage, when the night of death has closed in upon man, he will no longer be able to do anything that will merit eternal life. On this account the Apostle exhorts the Galatians to great earnestness in so important a work: 'Whilst we have time, let us work good to all men.'[2]

Therefore, to be in the state of grace and to be a wayfarer on earth while in that state, are the two conditions requisite on the part of the person who merits, in order that he may deserve the rewards which God has in store for those who do actions that are worthy of being crowned with His gifts.

In order that the actions of those who merit should deserve a condign reward (*de condigno*), it is required that they should not be performed by necessity; that they should be good and upright; and be supernatural, both in their principle and in their motive.

The necessity for the first condition is self-evident, because no act that is done upon compulsion, is worthy of reward. The same may be said of the second; for, only good and upright actions deserve to be crowned with a reward. But if any further proof be required, it will be found in the fact that it is to such actions only that the Sacred Scriptures ascribe merit in the sight of Almighty God. It is by good and upright acts that St. Peter counsels us to make our calling and election sure.[3] It is only to those that have performed such actions during their life that the Supreme Judge, on the great accounting day, will give that loving invitation to enter for ever into the joy of the Lord, and will for all eternity, banish from His presence, those who have acted wickedly and who have not, by sincere repentance, blotted out their misdeeds.[4]

[1] St. John ix. 4. [2] Galat. vi. 10. [3] 2 Peter i. 10. [4] St. John v. 29.

For, God cannot reward that which is evil—a statement that has induced some theologians to maintain that any admixture of evil with the good action so vitiates its nature, that God will not bestow upon it any reward. However, this doctrine is too rigid; for, the evil which may, perchance, insinuate itself into the best actions may be but accidental, and not such as utterly to destroy the ratio of good in the act. For instance, to bestow alms, or to do any other work of charity, is undoubtedly a good act. Nevertheless, it may happen during the progress of what was in the beginning upright and good, some little admixture of vanity, or of self-seeking will insinuate itself. This, of course, is not the main or chief end which the person has in view in relieving the wants of the poor, but only a very secondary one. Hence it will not wholly vitiate the act of charity; but it will detract somewhat from its beauty and its value. God will, therefore, reward the good that is in it, but at the same time will punish the evil, by not bestowing so great a reward upon the act as He would have given had there been no stain to mar its beauty and to lessen its worth. Therefore, goodness in the act performed is necessary, in order that it may deserve to be crowned with merit.

Furthermore, this goodness must be supernatural in the principle from which springs—that is to say, it must be elicited by the aid of actual grace. The reason is, that a meritorious act must belong to the same order of things to which belongs the reward wherewith it is crowned, otherwise there will be no kind of equality or proportion between them. Now, the reward bestowed upon meritorious acts is supernatural, being the possession of Almighty God. If, then, they be elicited by the aid of man's natural strength, there will be no kind of equality between them and the reward of heaven. They will be simply natural acts, deserving, perhaps, a natural or temporal reward, but not a supernatural one.

It will follow from this that the meritorious act must be supernatural, not only in its principle, but in its motive.

For, when any work is of such a nature that it always and in each particular requires the aid of supernatural grace, it is a sign that that work is supernatural in its mode also. As a further proof of this, we may add that as merit is only a means to gain an end—namely, eternal life—it will follow that there must be proportion between the means and the end. Therefore, as the end is supernatural, the means also must be supernatural, both in principle and in motive. This is insinuated in Scripture; for, if we take notice we shall find that whenever it promises a reward for works done, or when it speaks of acts which are in themselves supernatural,[1] or of others which are not of this nature, it adds something by which it indicates the necessity for a supernatural mode or motive for these acts. Thus, Our Lord says to His disciples: 'He that receiveth a prophet *in the name of a prophet*, and he that receiveth a just man *in the name of a just man*, shall receive the reward of a just man.'[2] Again He says: 'Whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water *in My name*, Amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.'[3]

Granting, then, that a meritorious act must be supernatural in its principle and in its motive, we may, perhaps ask whether that act must be elicited or commanded by a motive of charity? Upon this point it is important that we should have clear ideas, because some theologians have taught that only acts of this nature are meritorious. Others, while denying the necessity for their springing from the virtue of charity, have nevertheless maintained that they must proceed at least from the command of charity and thus remotely owe their existence to it, though in reality they are the offspring of some other virtue. These opinions, however, may be looked upon as the exceptional rather than as the ordinary teaching of the Schools. The generally received doctrine is that for an act to be meritorious, it is sufficient that it should proceed from the motive or command of any supernatural virtue. This is put beyond doubt by the answer given by Our Lord

[1] Such as acts of charity. [2] St. Matt. x. 41. [3] *Ibid.* x. 42.

to the young man who said to Him: 'What good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?' Our Lord replied: 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;' and as an amplification of His meaning, went on to enumerate the moral precepts of the Law.[1] Again; when speaking of the great judgment-day, and giving the words in which the Judge shall call the just to their reward, He says: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for, I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat, thirsty, and you gave Me to drink'—and the rest.[2] From both these passages we see that God bestows the kingdom of heaven as a reward for works or acts which are the fruits of various other virtues besides charity. Also, the Church has declared that the beatitude of heaven is given for works which pertain to other virtues; for, in one of the Tridentine Canons it is said: 'Eternal life is proposed as the reward for those who do good and hope in God unto the very end.' As, then, it cannot be shown, from the nature of the thing itself, or from any law of God, that an act, in order to be meritorious, must be elicited through a motive of charity, we conclude that no such condition is required, but that if it be the outcome of any other supernatural virtue whatever, that fact will suffice to make it meritorious.

Lastly, in order to make an act meritorious, '*de condigno*,' there is requisite on the part of God the *promise* of a reward. From this it will at once be understood that we are here speaking of such works as actually claim a reward; for, the good works of the just being supernatural both in their principle and in their motive, are, of themselves, proportioned to the reward. Therefore, they are meritorious, independently of the divine promise. When such a promise is attached to any work which a just man happens to perform, it does not add to its claim for a reward; it causes that reward to be only more certain. In all other cases, however, the promise on the part of God is an essential condition without which no work can be said to merit

[1] St. Matt. xix. 16, 17. [2] *Ibid.* xxv. 34.

reward '*de condigno*.' Resistance to the temptations of the devil and of his allies the world and the flesh, and, also, patient endurance, for God's sake, of the various ills affecting us in our present state, are instances of works meritorious in this way; for, to them is attached the divine promise: 'Blessed is the man,' says St. James, 'that endureth temptation; for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love Him.'[1] It is because the divine word is pledged to reward these acts that St. Paul calls eternal life, which is to crown our well-doing, '*the promises*:' 'Be followers of them, who through faith and patience shall inherit the promises;'[2] and in another place: 'Patience is necessary for you, that by doing the will of God you may receive the promises.'[3] Even if Holy Writ did not teach us this truth, our reason would be able to discover it for itself. For merit '*de condigno*' means that the work which we perform is worthy of a reward, and that there is an obligation on the part of God to bestow that reward upon us; because it is one of the essential qualities of such merit that we should have a *right* to the recompense. But what right have we where God is concerned, unless God, in some way, becomes our debtor? We have none whatever. How, then, is it possible for God, the Supreme Lord and Master of all things, to be under an obligation to us? In only one way is it possible for Him to contract any such obligation, and that is by a promise or compact by which He binds Himself to give a reward: 'Our Lord,' says St. Augustine, 'makes Himself our debtor, not by receiving anything from us, but by promising to bestow something upon us. To Him it is not said: "Pay that which Thou owest," but "Give that which Thou hast promised."'[4] Hence, our reason shows us that, on the part of God, a promise to reward, is an essential condition for making any work meritorious '*de condigno*.'

We have established, then, the existence of that species

[1] St. James i. 12. [2] Heb. vi. 12. [3] Heb. x. 36. [4] In Psalmum lxxxiii.

of merit, which through the goodness and the condescension of God is deserving of a reward out of a kind of justice, and which for that reason is called *merit 'de condigno'* ; also of that species of merit to which no reward is attached except through a certain becomingness, which merit is for that reason called *congruous.* We have seen what conditions are requisite on the part of him who merits, in order that he may deserve a reward; what qualities must be in his work to make it worthy of a crown; and what conditions are necessary on the part of God in order that any work may be considered meritorious *'de condigno.'* All that now remains to be said upon the subject of merit, is to point out what is its object, or that which is given to it as its exceeding great reward. Of this we will treat in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### *THE OBJECT OF MERIT.*

WHEN we speak of the *object* of anything, we mean the mark at which it aims, or the end which is the resting-place of all its strivings. The object of merit, therefore, is that reward which is bestowed upon him who has deserved well of God, and has laid up for himself in the heavenly garners a measure, more or less full, of good deeds. As, then, the reward bestowed upon these is, first *grace*, and then eternal glory, we must say that the object of merit is twofold. With respect to glory it is certain, with the certainty of faith, that by his good works, a just man is able to merit, '*de condigno*,' the reward of eternal glory, and an increase of that glory. This is the teaching of the Church; for, the Council of Trent anathematises anyone who shall say that the good works of a justified man are in such a way the gifts of God that they are not the merits of the man himself; or who shall maintain that he does not truly merit, by the good works which he is enabled to perform through the grace of God and the merits of Christ, of Whose mystical body he is a member—first of all, an increase of grace; then eternal life and the attainment of eternal life; and lastly, an increase of glory— provided only that he departs this life in the friendship of Almighty God.[1]

The reason upon which it builds this dogmatic utterance is the fact that eternal glory, the wages of all our good works, is a debt owing to him who has been a pursuer of them during the course of his mortal pilgrimage. Hence,

[1] Sess. VI., Can. 32.

Our Lord, when speaking of God, Whom St. Paul calls a *just Judge*, uses, concerning Him, language which indicates that He is in some sort a debtor Who pays what is just to those in whose regard He has contracted this obligation; 'God, the just Judge, will render to every man according to his works.'[1]

But with respect to *grace*, it is far otherwise. For, man is not able to merit, even *congruously*, the first actual grace. This is certain; because the Church teaches that, in the case of adults, the very beginning of justification is owing to the preventing grace of God, through Jesus Christ: that is to say, they are called unto it without the existence of any merit whatever on their part. If we examine why this is so, we shall discover that it is owing to the nature of merit itself. For merit supposes the aid of actual grace which, out of pure mercy, is granted to us by God. It has, consequently, passed into an axiom among theologians that the principle or beginning of merit cannot fall under merit. Therefore, if, as St. Paul says, 'It is by grace, it is no more by works: otherwise grace is no more grace.'[2] Also, it is certain that an adult does not merit '*de condigno*' the first sanctifying grace. For, if he could merit this, his justification would no longer be the gratuitous gift of God, because he would merit the cause of his justification. But to uphold any such proposition would be to go in direct opposition to the divinely inspired teaching of the Apostle who says that, 'we are justified freely'—*gratis*—'by His grace;'[3] and the Church in its explanation of these words declares that men are said to be justified *freely*, because nothing that precedes justification, whether it is faith or works, can merit the grace itself of justification;[4] that is to say, '*de condigno*.' But although an adult is not able to merit in this way, the first sanctifying grace, he is able to merit, and that, too, '*de condigno*,' an increase of that grace when once he has obtained possession of it through the gratuitous mercy of God. This is of faith; for, the Council of Trent defined it to be the teaching of the Church;[5] and

[1] St. Matt. xvi. 27. [2] Rom. xi. 6. [3] Rom. iii. 24.
[4] Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., Cap. 8. [5] Sess., VI. Can. 32.

the reason is that in this case there is a distinct promise to this effect, for it is said of the just 'their path, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day.'[1] Also, it is equally certain that by means of perfect contrition, man is able to merit '*de congruo*,' and, indeed, infallibly, the first sanctifying grace. This is the teaching of St. Augustine,[2] who says: 'Even the remission of sins, which is joined with the first grace, is not gained without some merit, if faith obtains it; for, faith is not without merit. The reason of this will unfold itself clearly to us, if we bear in mind what is requisite in any act, in order to make it congruously meritorious. It must be a free act, good, supernatural, and elicited by one who is still a wayfarer on the earth. Now, all these qualifications are found united in the act of perfect contrition and in the love of God above all things, which qualifications are the ultimate dispositions for justification. Hence, it is evident that anyone who is able to elicit such an act, will merit "*de congruo*" even the first sanctifying grace.'

Having explained the object of merit, nothing more now remains to be said upon the subject of divine grace, unless it is to answer, as far as our ability will permit, three questions which naturally suggest themselves concerning those who are justified, that is to say, who are the friends of God by reason of the indwelling within them of sanctifying grace

The first of these questions is: 'Whether a just man can merit his restoration to grace and favour, if he should have the misfortune to fall into grievous sin.'

The second is: 'Whether he can merit the grace of final perseverance.'

The third is: 'Whether he can merit grace for others.'

With respect to the first question, we may say that a man who has fallen from his justice by the commission of some grievous sin, cannot merit a return to favour '*de condigno*,' but only probably '*de congruo*.' Such is evidently the thought of the Prophet Ezechiel when he

[1] Prov. iv. 18. [2] Epist. cv.

says: 'If the just turn himself away from his justice and do iniquity, all his justice which he hath done shall not be remembered.'[1] In another chapter he says: 'The justice of the just man shall not deliver him, in what day soever he shall sin. . . . . and the just shall not be able to live in his justice in what day soever he shall sin.'[2] But these words, inspired by the Holy Ghost, would receive a flat contradiction, if the just man's former good deeds were held in remembrance and were able to merit his deliverance from his fallen state. Besides, in order to merit that favour '*de condigno*,' it must be remembered that God's promise to confer it is an essential condition. Now, from the Sacred Scriptures, it is imposible to bring forwards a single passage in which any promise of that kind is recorded; for, nowhere is it stated that He has pledged Himself to restore one who has fallen away from his high estate, as child of God and heir to an eternal kingdom. Moreover, if such a one were able '*de condigno*, to merit his restoration to favour, it would follow as a natural consequence from the fact of his having once been just and a pursuer of good works, that he could not die in his sins, for, God would be obliged in justice to give him the grace of reparation. This teaching, as we have already seen, has been condemned and anathematised by the decree of the Church. Therefore, it is manifest that once a man has fallen away from that state of grace, he cannot merit, as a matter of justice, '*de condigno*,' a restoration to his former state.

Yet, though he cannot in this way merit it, he may, nevertheless, '*congruously*' merit it by turning again to God, and by seeking from His infinite mercy a renewal of favour. Spiritual writers generally bring forwards in support of this, David's pathetic appeal for the protection and the support of God, when mental vigour and bodily strength shall have left his mortal frame, as the prayer of one who has fallen away from grace, and who is begging for a restoration to favour: 'When my strength shall fail, do not Thou forsake me,'[3] This *accommodatitious* or adapted

[1] Ezech. xviii. 24. [2] Ezech. xxxiii. 12. [3] Psalm lxx. 9.

sense will, no doubt, bear this signification, and it is quite legitimate, for, it is one of the modes of interpretation sanctioned by the Church. Hence, we may argue upon it and say: 'Such a prayer would be to no purpose, unless the request made in it could be obtained and merited at least *congruously*, as a something that it is becoming on the part of God to grant.' The reason is that, though the merits of one who has lapsed into sin are what theologians call '*mortificata*' or deadened, it does not follow that they thereby lose the force of moving God —through a certain congruity—to have regard to them, and to suffer them to plead in His sight for the restoration of him who, though now in disgrace was, nevertheless, once a true and faithful servant.

If, however, the just man does not fall away from the happy state of grace, but if he remains steadfast in it, he cannot merit '*de condigno*,' by his fidelity and by his worth, the great grace of final perseverance. Once again we must repeat, and by repeating endeavour to impress upon the mind of the reader, that in order to merit '*de condigno*,' or as a matter of justice, it is necessary that on the part of God there should be some promise to this effect. But of any such promise to the just, there can nowhere be found even a trace which would lead us to think that by their good works they may deserve never to fall away, but to continue in their justice till they shall have passed from this world of conflict into the serene and peaceful abode of everlasting rest, in which there is not and there cannot be any shadow of change or any danger of inconstancy. So far is this from being the case, that the just are even warned not to trust in anything of the kind, but to work out their salvation in fear and trembling: 'Let him that thinketh himself to stand,' says the Apostle, 'take heed lest he fall.'[1] From these words it is evident that perseverance in good is an uncertain thing, and, therefore, that there cannot be any promise on the part of God to grant it as a reward to the good works of the just. If anyone were to maintain that

[1] 1 Cor. x. 12

he could merit with an absolute and infallible certainty this great gift of perseverance, he would fall under the anathema of the Church, unless, indeed, he knew this by a special revelation from God, which is the only condition on which she allows anyone to hold such a proposition.[1] Moreover, if anyone could have such a certainty as this, independently of any revelation, it would follow as a natural consequence either that he will infallibly not sin, or, if he sin, that he will infallibly recover the favour of God and die in the happy state of grace. But, as we have already proved, this is utterly false, and, therefore, the assumption from which it is drawn, cannot but be of the same nature. Nevertheless, as in the preceding question so also in this, though the just man cannot '*de condigno*' merit the grace of perseverance, he may '*de congruo*' merit it; for, St. Peter exhorts us 'to make our calling and election sure by means of good works;' and the reason which he assigns for deeming such a thing possible is that, by acting in this way, 'we shall not sin at any time.'[2] Therefore, according to this trustworthy authority, good works are able to make our election to eternal life more secure, because they indicate that we are on the way to final perseverance.

From what has already been said on the subject of meriting for one's self, the reader will be able to anticipate the answer which we are about to give to the last question: 'Whether we are able to merit for others.' If, as we saw, a man cannot merit *de* '*condigno*' for himself, but only '*de congruo*,' the first sanctifying grace, still less will he be able to merit it for others; and even the possibility of his congruously meriting it for others is not an absolute certainty; for, there is always room to doubt whether God, out of regard for the good which he is doing, will grant his petition. This conclusion is drawn from the words in which Our Lord promised to hear our petitions: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you.'[3] Observe, He does not

[1] Concil. Trid., Sess. VI. [2] 2 St. Peter i. 10. [3] St. John xvi. 23.

promise to give that which we ask for others, but only that which we ask for ourselves. Hence, St. Augustine, commenting upon these words, 'He will give to you,' says that they must be understood only of those who ask. 'All the Saints,' he continues, 'are heard when they plead for *themselves*, but not when they petition for all—for friends or for enemies, or for any others; for, it is not said, "He will *give*," but "He will give to you."'[1] The same inference may be drawn from all those passages which tell us that God will give to everyone according to his works. For, they clearly indicate that He does not acknowledge between man and man the existence of any connection, which would convey to the one the merit due to the works of the other. Consequently, these merits are simply personal. They cannot be transferred to others, at the will of him who, by his virtuous actions, has acquired them. 'Would that it were possible for me,' exclaims St. Chrysostom, 'by labouring for you all, to make you act righteously; but that is impossible—by our own works we are saved.'[2] Here once again, as in the preceding cases, the reason is, that God has nowhere promised that the just man by his good works shall be able to merit for him who is unjust; and without the existence of that promise, there can be no merit '*de condigno*.' Hence, no one by his good works can in this way merit grace for others. For, if this were possible, it could be the result only of some ordinance of God by which the nature of sanctifying grace is made to be such that it flows from one man unto others. But no such ordinance exists; nor is there in the nature of sanctifying grace anything that enables us to make one man the head of others. Hence, the merit of one cannot procure a reward for others. Only the God-Man Jesus is able to do this; for, being the head of all, He is able to merit for all, 'and of His fulness,' as St. John says, 'we all have received, and grace for grace.'[3]

In the Scriptures, however, there is nothing which teaches that one man may not *congruously* merit for others, nor

[1] In Joannem Tract., 102. [2] Homil. ad Populum XII. [3] St. John i. 16.

is there in the nature of sanctifying grace anything that would prevent him from so doing. Therefore it is that we are exhorted to pray for one another: 'Pray for one another that you may be saved.'[1] For the same reason God orders Job's foolish friends who were so angry with the holy man for attempting to justify himself, to ask him to pray for them: 'Go to My servant Job, and offer for yourselves a holocaust, and My servant Job shall pray for you; his face I will accept, that folly be not imputed to you.'[2] We may, therefore, justly infer that it was owing to the prayers of St. Stephen that Saul, who held the garments of those who were murdering the holy Deacon was brought to the light of the true faith and to the high office of the Apostolate: 'If the Martyr Stephen had not prayed,' says St. Augustine,' the Church would not at this day have the Apostle Paul.'[3]

As a matter of fact, the Church is so convinced of the efficacy of prayer to move God to bestow grace upon others that in her liturgy she publicly prays for pagans, Jews, and sinners of every description; and the reason for so doing is obvious; for, it cannot be but that the earnest and persevering prayer of one who is the friend of God, will obtain from Him mercy and favour for anyone in whom that friend feels a great interest or for whom he has a special love. Nevertheless, it must not for a moment be supposed that Almighty God is moved to do this by the merits of one who incessantly importunes Him for his friends. He confers His grace upon man in virtue of the merits of Christ only, and He confers it, too, in an ordinary way, which is that the person for whom prayers are offered should correspond in some degree with the preventing and moving grace of God, by prayer, by acts of contrition, and by various other means by which our hearts are made ready for the reception of the divine favours. Now, although the Church teaches that one man may *congruously* merit grace for others, she does not teach that he can merit it in such a way as that God will infallibly hear and accept his petition. Her

[1] St. James v. 16. [2] Job xlii. 8. [3] De Sanctis, Sermo II.

doctrine is that, in spite of all our zeal and virtue, God may refuse to accede to our wishes, and may withhold His favour from him or from those for whom we so ardently desire to obtain it.

In the Sacred Scriptures, we find Him acting thus with the Prophet Samuel. When God had rejected Saul from being king over His people, the heart of the grand old Seer, captivated by the many noble qualities of Israel's first king, mourned for and prayed God to deal favourably with him. But to no purpose; for, God at last, half reproachfully, said to Samuel 'How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, whom I have rejected?'[1] At a later date, when speaking to Jeremias, who no doubt was pleading in the same spirit for a stiff-necked and rebellious people, He said: 'If Moses and Samuel shall stand before me' (to pray for them) 'My soul is not towards this people.'[2] It is evident, therefore, from these passages, that God has not decreed to bestow gifts or favours upon any man on account of the merits of the just. Hence it is that we cannot expect, when praying for others, that He will infallibly hear us and bestow upon them the favours for which we crave. In order to have such a certainty as this, it is necessary, we repeat once again, to have a divine promise to that effect; for, this promise is an essential condition for merit '*de condigno*,' which infallibly obtains that which is its due.

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 1. [2] Jerem. xv. 1.

# CHAPTER XXIII.

## *DOCILITY TO THE INSPIRATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.*

### SECTION I.

#### EXISTENCE OF AN INTERNAL GUIDE.

It will, perhaps, be remembered that when treating of purity of heart, which by the older ascetics was considered to be perfection itself, we spoke of the three great means by which it may be procured. These are: to avoid venial sin, to rid one's self of evil habits, and to keep so careful a watch over one's thoughts, that only those that are free from stain may be admitted into the mind. There is, besides these three, one other most important means for securing purity of heart, namely, that attention which the soul pays to the inspirations and the workings of the Holy Spirit within it. In fact, this is an element of the spiritual life so imperatively necessary, that its deficiency would constitute a very serious obstacle to the attainment of perfection.

It will be necessary, therefore, to devote this chapter to the consideration of it. We will try first to demonstrate the existence of this internal guidance and the necessity for submitting one's self to it. In the next place, we will point out the means which are best adapted to secure this docile temper of mind. Lastly, we will suggest a few motives which are calculated to stir up the energy of the will and make it strive to keep this Guide and Comforter ever in our hearts.

At the very outset, then, we may state, by way of preface that the special mission of this Holy Spirit of God in our

hearts is to sanctify them, and by sanctifying them, daily to make them advance more and more in the way of perfection. When we say that the mission specially chosen by the third Person of the Blessed Trinity is to sanctify the souls of men, it must be borne in mind that concerning the economy of God's providence, we are stating a fact of which the writings of the Fathers give ample testimony, to which the pages of Holy Writ bear witness in countless passages, and about which the authoritative teaching of the Church leaves us no room to doubt. For, though in all the works of the Godhead the three Divine Persons act conjointly, with unity of will and of power, yet each of them has assumed, and each of them exercises directly, some particular sphere of action, in which, though the other two Divine Persons co-operate by their essence, yet the actions themselves are attributed to only one Divine Person. Thus, the Father is said to preside over the work of creation, the Son over that of redemption, and the Holy Ghost over that of sanctification. Nevertheless, as we may logically infer from the Athanasian Creed, neither the Son nor the Holy Ghost is excluded from any action of the Father; nor are the Father and the Holy Ghost excluded from any action of the Son; nor the Son and the Father from any action of the Holy Ghost. We say, then, that the office of Sanctifier is, in a special way, exercised by this Divine Spirit, and His work of sanctification is one which is performed by Him, not merely in a general sort of way by directing mankind as a great mass, but in a most special and particular manner—by a permanent in-dwelling in the hearts of those who are free from the stain of grievous sin.

Having premised thus much, we may now proceed to show that the Holy Spirit actually does exercise this office which is attributed to Him.

The first public, sensible manifestation of His sanctifying presence among men was vouchsafed to us in the person of Our blessed Lord Himself, Who, as being the model Man, the new Adam, might deservedly claim to be the first openly and before the eyes of the world to receive

the visitation of the Spirit. For, when the Baptist had poured upon Christ's head the symbolical waters of the Jordan, 'the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape upon Him,'[1] and remained with Him, thereby to insinuate that the Holy Spirit abides with those who joyfully receive Him, and who do not, by the commission of sin, reject Him from the tabernacle of their heart. From Our Lord, as head of the great Christian body, that Divine Spirit was to be diffused throughout all the members; and, therefore, we find Jesus frequently promising the Holy Spirit to those who should believe in Him. To His chosen twelve this promise was made in a more special manner than to the great body of believers at large. Therefore, the words in which Christ spoke to them of this Holy Spirit, upon that ever-memorable occasion when, after having instituted the Holy Eucharist, He went forth from the supper-chamber to His death, prove to demonstration the great facts of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, and of His guidance of them in the ways of perfection. For, Our Lord told them that the Holy Ghost should be sent to them by the Father in His name; that He should take up His abode in their hearts, that His office should be to teach them all truth, and to bring back to their minds whatever had been said to them by Himself during the years of His ministry.[2] He foretold that in course of time those who had called Him Beelzebub and had taunted Him with casting out devils by the agency of devils, should treat them also in the same way; should drag them into the presence of Princes and of Rulers, and put them upon their trial for the faith which was in them and for the doctrine which they taught. On these critical occasions He bade them not to fear, not to meditate beforehand upon the answer which they should make, because the Holy Ghost should teach them in that hour what they were to say,[3] and no man should be able to contradict them, inasmuch as their wisdom, and the words in which it was expressed, should be the words and the wisdom of the Holy Ghost speaking in them.[4]

[1] St. Luke iii. 22. [2] St. John xiv. 26; xvi. 13. [3] St. Mark xiii. 9, 11.
[4] St. Matt. x. 20.

The promise made by Christ to the Apostles, to send the Holy Spirit, was accomplished on the day of Pentecost, for, then the Divine Spirit came down upon them, and filled them with that knowledge and with that spiritual power, of which they had heard Our Lord speak so much. The Paraclete took up His abode in their hearts, and from that time forth became their teacher and their guide in the difficulties of their missionary career. Of this fact we have abundant evidence in the pages of the New Testament. It was owing to the inspiration and the guidance of this Spirit that St. Peter ventured to admit the Gentile converts to a participation in all the good things of the New Dispensation. By so doing he was guilty, in the eyes of those who were of the Circumcision, of a species of sacrilege; and when they called him to account for what he had done, he appealed in justification of his conduct to the guidance which he had received from the Spirit of God: 'And the Spirit said to me that I should go with the men sent to me by Cornelius, nothing doubting.'[1] The same Holy Spirit moved the Elders at Antioch to ordain and send forth Saul and Barnabas upon their famous mission to Seleucia and to Cyprus, to Iconium and to Lystra; for, while these Doctors of the infant Church were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Ghost said to them: 'Separate Me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have taken them.'[2]

Not only to the Apostles and to those who were chosen for the ministry of the word, was this Divine Spirit given as a guide and comforter, but to the faithful generally, for on whomsoever the Apostles imposed hands, upon them the Paraclete descended, even as He had descended upon themselves. Hence, St. Paul, when urging his converts at Corinth to lead lives worthy of the high vocation unto which they had been called, impresses upon them the necessity for so doing, from the fact that the Holy Ghost had taken up His abode in their hearts: 'Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you'?[3] We must not, however, imagine that

[1] Acts xi. 12. [2] Acts xiii. 2. [3] 1 Cor. iii. 16.

this office, which is attributed to the Holy Ghost, was exercised by Him only after the day of Pentecost. Even under the Old Dispensation, when the mystery of the Blessed Trinity is generally supposed to have been known to only a few, and when the Holy Ghost is usually understood to be meant whenever anything is attributed to the Spirit of the Lord, David, in numberless passages, invokes His aid and guidance in the ways of perfection, and attributes to Him that direction, inspiration, and illumination of the intellect, and that moving and strengthening of the human will, which enable men to tread confidently and securely in the intricate paths of the spiritual life. Thus in the Psalms he prays to be directed in the truth of God, to have his way made secure in God's all holy sight, and those paths pointed out to him in which it might please the Lord that he should walk, saying: 'Direct me in Thy truth;[1] direct my way in Thy sight;[2] make the way known to me wherein I should walk;[3] show, O Lord, Thy ways to me, and teach me Thy paths;[4] open Thou my eyes, and I will consider the wondrous things of Thy law;[5] teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God,[6] Who teachest man Thy knowledge.'[7] These, and a multitude of other passages which are too numerous to be cited, put beyond doubt the fact of the Holy Spirit's guidance, and of His indwelling in the souls of men, for the purpose of pointing out to them the way in which they should walk, and of giving them strength to speed along it, even unto the end of their days.

Of these two facts, all the great masters of the spiritual life are fully persuaded. They never attempt to give proofs of them; for, they consider them to be so well established and so undeniably evident that, in their judgment it would be folly to call them in question. It is for this reason that our holy Father St. Benedict takes for granted that the Holy Spirit is the internal guide of men in the ways of perfection; for, when he himself, as leader of the numerous religious family which had gathered

[1] Ps. xxiv. 5. [2] Ps. v. 9. [3] Ps. cxlii. 8.
[4] Ps. xxiv. 4. [5] Ps. cxviii. 18. [6] Ps. cxlii. 10. [7] Ps. xciii. 10.

round him, was about to draw up a Rule for their external guidance, he spoke in its first page of that internal direction of the Holy Ghost, the existence of which stood out so plain before his eyes in well-nigh every page of Holy Writ. Addressing those who had put themselves under his guidance, and pointing out the internal Leader Who was to go before them, and to show the ways which conduct to everlasting life, he says to each of them: 'Hearken, my son, to the precepts of thy Master, that is to say, the Holy Spirit,[1] and incline the ear of thy heart willingly to hear, and effectually to accomplish the admonitions of thy loving Father, that by the labour of obedience thou mayest return to Him, from Whom thou didst depart by the sloth of disobedience.' He tells them, a little farther on, that all the religious practices of their lives should be begun and be carried on only after prayer to the Holy Spirit for light and direction: 'First of all whatever good work thou dost begin, beg of Him with most earnest prayer to perfect.'[2] Again; being fully alive to the importance of watching for and of seconding the movements and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, he bids them 'have their eyes open to the deifying light';[3] for, just as scholars look into the face of their master and watch for the words of instruction which flow from his lips, so ought monks to be on the alert to attend to the teachings of the Spirit. In point of fact, he calls the monastery 'a school in which the service of God is learnt, and a workshop in which the art of the spiritual life is taught.'[4]

Furthermore, as if to show how fully convinced he was in his own mind of the internal teaching and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he purposely abstains from making a hard and fast rule, to which there shall be no exception, regarding the amount of private prayer, lest he should thereby be putting an obstacle in the way of divine grace; hence he says: 'Our prayer ought to be pure and short, unless perchance it is prolonged by the inspiration of

[1] Calmet, In Reg. St. Bened. Prolog.
[2] Prolog. in Regulam. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

divine grace.'[1] For the same reason he shows manifest reluctance to prescribe the measure of drink, when he says: 'Everyone hath his proper gift from God, one thus, and another thus. Therefore, it is not without some misgiving that we appoint the measure of other men's victuals. But let those upon whom God bestows the gift of abstinence know that they shall receive their proper reward.'[2]

The same firm conviction, on this point, is observable in the teachings of the Solitaries whose doctrine has been preserved for our edification in the pages of Cassian's Conferences. In one of these, a venerable hermit declares that 'it is by God's inspiration that men begin a religious life, and that it is by the discipline, instruction, and illumination of God they attain to perfection.' In another place another Solitary says: 'Unless a soul is enlightened by a daily illumination from God, it can do no good at all.' It is, no doubt, owing to the lessons learnt in this illustrious school of asceticism, that St. Benedict, in his Rule, confines his legislation chiefly to external matters; for, if we take the trouble to examine into the motives which dictated the ordinances drawn up by him for the government of his children, we shall find that they are all framed with a view to remove everything that might hinder the inspirations of the Holy Spirit from reaching the ears of their souls. He insists upon solitude; for, it is into solitude that the Spirit leads the soul in order to speak to the heart. He orders abstraction from all external business and from the affairs of the world, unless obedience requires that a monk be employed in them for the good of his monastery; because it is only with great difficulty that the Lord can be found amid the noise, and hurry, and bustle of a secular life. For the same reason he ordains so strict a silence, knowing full well that in much speaking a man shall not escape sin, and that a man full of tongue shall not be directed by God upon the earth.

[1] Regula, Cap. xx.

[2] Regula, Cap. xl., and Sancta Sophia, I. Treatise., Cap. iv.

Hence, we see how necessary it is ever to hold our spirit in the attitude of eager attention to whatever the Holy Spirit shall speak unto it; and one reason the more to urge and impress this necessity upon us is the fact that owing to our fallen state, He has a powerful adversary to contend against and He speaks to those whose faculties of hearing and of doing have been grievously impaired by the wreck of their primal integrity. Therefore, the soul which cannot but be conscious of all this, must ever be watching for the gentle accents of that low, soft voice which speaks within it, filling it with noble aspirations towards what is good, and gently urging it to take those steps which will carry those suggestions into effect. It was because the Wise Man was so keenly alive to the necessity for this attention, that he so frequently and so earnestly exhorts us to attend to the inspirations and the movements of the Holy Spirit: 'My son,' he says, in the person of the Divine Guide, 'attend to my wisdom, and incline thy ear to my prudence;[1] hear me and attend to the words of my mouth;[2] hearken and learn the discipline of understanding, and attend to my words in thy heart and I will show forth good doctrine in equity, and will seek to declare wisdom; attend to my words in thy heart, and I will show forth in truth the knowledge of God.'[3] It was by this attention that the royal Prophet reached so eminent a degree of sanctity as to become a man according to God's own heart; for, he says of himself, as if stating the ordinary temper of his mind, and his customary method of acting with God: 'I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me;'[4] and in consequence of this holy disposition, he was rewarded with a docility which he expressed in the words: 'My heart is ready, O Lord! my heart is ready!'[5] Similar, also, will be the effect of a like attitude of mind in us, a fact which serves to show only still more clearly, if possible, the necessity for this watchful attention to the suggestions of the Lord; for, as a result of it we shall find ourselves endowed with a force that will enable us to perform whatever the Holy Spirit shall counsel as being

[1] Prov. v. 1. [2] *Ibid* vii. 24. [3] Ecclus. xvi. 24, 25.
[4] Ps. lxxxiv. 9. [5] Ps. lvi. 8.

pleasing to Him and advantageous to us; and our souls will, in course of time, become so docile, and will so give themselves up to His direction, that, like a musical instrument under the touch of a player, they will respond to the slightest movement of His guiding hand, and accomplish in all things His most holy will.

But here there presents itself a serious difficulty, which must be met and answered satisfactorily. It is this. Many persons are willing enough to admit that the Holy Spirit of God does actually suggest to the minds of the faithful, good thoughts, pious affections, and excellent lines of conduct; that He powerfully and efficaciously moves them to carry all these into effect; also that to all these inspirations and movements, a prompt obedience ought to be given by those who are favoured with them. But having admitted thus much, they will ask: 'What security is there —what security can there be that these inspirations and movements come from the Holy Ghost?' Not every thought, not every inspiration, is of God; not every way is right that seems to men to be so; for, Satan is able to transform himself into an Angel of light, and lure men to destruction. Luther very probably felt himself inspired and moved to defy the Pope, to set aside his vows and to take unto himself a wife; Wycliffe, too, may have thought that he had a divine call to deny the Real Presence and to proclaim it to be damnable idolatry; John Knox unquestionably felt himself urged by an interior spirit to overturn prelacy and to designate it an invention of the devil. Yet it is not difficult to see by what spirit these men were moved—'a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos' Hence, many persons ask: What security can we have that we are not deluded, and that we do not imagine that our inspirations and our impulses come from God, whereas we may all the while be the dupes of the devil, or the puppets of our own disordered fancies?

To this we reply that, anyone who admits the fact of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in the hearts of men, and the fact of His inspiring and moving them unto what is good, must also, in order to be logical, confess that the same Holy

Spirit is obliged to procure for those whom He guides, a certainty that the movements and inspirations by which He guides them are from Himself. If He did not do this, all those exhortations of the Sacred Scriptures to attend to His inspirations would be vain. Vain, also, would be the promises of Our Lord, to give the Holy Spirit unto all those who ask for His guidance. There must, therefore be some guarantee on the part of God, some marks by which we may rationally judge either that the internal movements and the guidance experienced by us derive their origin from Him, or that they do not. But while arguing for the necessity for some such certainty as this, we do not for one moment maintain that it is, or that it should be, anything more than a moral certainty, such as is sufficient for a rational being to act upon, without the imputation of presumption or of folly. Physical certainty on such matters cannot be had, except by a special revelation, which would carry with it unmistakable proofs of its heavenly origin.

We say, therefore, that all true illuminations, inspirations, and movements of the Holy Ghost vouchsafed to the faithful, bear upon them His divine impress, in a sufficiently evident way to give us a moral certainty of their authenticity. For, in the first place, they are usually given to the soul in time of prayer, or else they suggest themselves to it immediately after that holy exercise. Moreover, what they urge the soul to do, is never contrary to the Law of God, or the prescriptions of obedience. Now, it is an article of our holy faith, that there can be no good thought, no holy impulse worthy of an eternal reward, unless it has been inspired by the grace of the Holy Ghost; and reason itself shows us that such movements and impulses are either not granted to, or, if they are granted, are not perceived by a soul whose mental vision is darkened by the vapours of lust, and its whole spiritual nature thrown into confusion by the strife of passions. When, therefore, any impulse, or movement, or inspiration presents itself to the soul, bearing in its hands such credentials as these, that impulse, or movement or inspiration may be deservedly

looked upon as coming from the Holy Spirit, and the soul may safely follow the course of action which it traces out for it, inasmuch as it has a moral certainty, that it is thereby obeying the injunctions of the Holy Ghost. Hence, we may argue that, just as he who acts upon moral certainty cannot be accused of acting imprudently, so also the soul which listens to and follows out inspirations bearing upon them the impress of the Holy Ghost, cannot be considered to be acting with imprudence.

Nevertheless, to those who are thus eager to follow the lead of the Spirit we deem it necessary to give one caution which may be of use to them. They must not suppose that *all* the impulses and the movements received in prayer, or in consequence of it, are equally to be relied upon. Some are deserving of more trust than others. Therefore it is necessary for each person to be wary, to search and to see whether these impulses and these movements are of God, and not rather the outcome of his own nature. Hence, we advise all to place but little trust in impulses that come to them after sensible fervour and devotion; for, though such favours as sweetness and raptures in prayer and in spiritual exercises are very often the gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet they are also, at times, nothing more than the outcome of a sanguine temperament and of a lively imagination. Therefore, if we perceive that our imagination and our senses have been mixed up with the inspirations and the movements received, let us be on our guard and carefully eliminate from these inspirations and movements what is merely natural, and we shall be saved from endless faults, mistakes, indiscretions, and disappointments. But if, either after or during prayer, which is made with calm serenity of mind and in which the play of the fancy has been restrained and the senses have been kept under control, there should be given to us a clear light concerning some difficult matter of importance about which we have consulted the Lord, or if a new way of looking at that matter is flashed into our minds, we may, with moral

certainty, believe that this light and this new way are of God, and with perfect safety act upon them.

Another objection, which at first sight seems to be somewhat formidable, is oftentimes put forwards against the doctrine which we have been teaching. It is an objection drawn from the great Christian duty of obedience to those who, by the ordinance of God, are set over us to direct and govern us in our way of life. What, it is asked, will become of that obedience and subordination to our Superior's views, wishes, and laws, if each man may believe that he is directly inspired by the Holy Ghost? Does not such a doctrine undermine the very foundations of religion and of human society? Will not one who has what he imagines to be the warrant of God for his actions, set at naught all merely human authority?

We answer that the danger to human jurisdiction apprehended in this objection is only apparent. It will vanish into thin air when the limits are clearly seen, within which what we believe to be the inspiration of the Holy Spirit can claim our obedience. Observe, then, that while insisting upon the necessity for listening to and for obeying the voice of the Holy Spirit, we have never for a moment supposed that the external guidance of Superiors is to cease. In the spiritual life, both are constantly put before us. Moreover, it is a principle of ascetical theology that the external guide has the *first* claim upon our obedience; and should the orders of the Holy Spirit clash with those of the external Superior, this latter must be obeyed and the orders of the internal Guide must be set aside, at least for the time being. The reason of this is not difficult to see; for, as the Apostle says, all legitimately constituted authority is of God. Therefore, its ordinances bear upon them the manifest and unquestionable impress of the divine will. On the other hand, the impulses, the movements, and the inspirations of the internal Guide—the Holy Spirit—cannot, by their very nature, be either so manifest or so unquestionable. Consequently, the external guide—or human authority— must prescribe for and direct

all the movements and the suggestions of the internal Guide; because the divine will is made evident either through the authority of Superiors, or by the agency of established laws. From this fact, therefore, the ordinances of Superiors are endowed with a kind of *public* authority, whereas the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, made to any individual man, are invested with only *private* authority. Now, it is a legal axiom which no one will call in question that, in the conflict of jurisdiction, private must yield to public authority; and from this axiom it will be manifest that the obedience which we say should be paid to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, cannot ever set aside the authority of Superiors. Moreover, it is the teaching of spiritual writers, that a subject should not venture to follow out suggestions made to his soul by the Holy Spirit, even when these suggestions happen to be outside the authority of the Rule, without first submitting them to the judgment of Superiors.[1]

But what, you will say, must be thought of the inspiration of the internal Guide, when it happens to run counter to the wishes of the external Superior, and when it is by him set aside; does it, for that reason, cease to be a true inspiration? This difficulty is solved by the principle that these internal inspirations are to be looked upon as implying some such condition as this: 'If the Superior does not think fit to order matters differently;' and, hence, the fact of their being discountenanced by him, does not prove that the soul has been mistaken in judging them to be from the Holy Ghost, but only that the inspirations are inexpedient at the present time. Therefore, we see plainly that the docility with which we listen to and obey the impulses of the Holy Spirit, can never be prejudicial to that humble obedience which we owe to all rightly constituted authority; and also, that no one led by the Holy Spirit will disdain the counsel of the wise, and the wishes of those who are set over him; for, the Holy Ghost Himself orders those whom He guides to consult the

[1] Regula, St Bened., Cap. xlix.

enlightened and to follow their directions. Thus, when Saul was cast to the earth and blinded by the glory of the heavenly vision vouchsafed to him, he was ordered by the Spirit to go to Ananias, and from him learn the will of God. With child-like trust, therefore, may we listen to the inspiration and follow the leading of the same Holy Spirit, whithersoever it shall please Him to conduct us.[1]

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## SECTION III.

### MEANS TO ACQUIRE DOCILITY.

It must, however, be remembered that this happy and profitable frame of mind is not to be had for the mere desiring of it. We cannot purchase it ready-made, as we purchase our garments; for, it is a growth of habit, springing from a germ planted by the Holy Ghost in the soul, as are all other good and perfect gifts of God. As this germ has to be tended, and watched, and nurtured, like some rare plant growing in an uncongenial soil, it is necessary that we should point out the means which will help to bring it to maturity. We have already said, or at least hinted, that a very serious hindrance to the operations of the Holy Ghost in the soul of man, is man's own heart. For, enthroned there is another teacher, who, by his witching eloquence, gains the ear and the affections of a by no means indocile scholar. The lessons of this master are easily learnt, and the learning of them fills the soul with pleasure. This teacher is the spirit of the flesh, which has taken forcible possession of the chair of Moses—not to preach the doctrine of Moses, an office which the Scribes, performed—but to propagate principles which lead men into the abyss of hell. Therefore, the first step that must be taken to procure docility to the lessons of the true Teacher, is to eject the

[1] See Sancta Sophia, I. Treatise, Sec. II., Chap. iv., v., viii., ix.

usurper from his throne. The Holy Spirit cannot, and He will not lift up His voice in our hearts till this be done; for, He cannot dwell in a soul subject to sin, or make His low, soft accents heard amid the uproar which the carnal spirit and his foul following always create. Therefore, when the soul shall have laid hold of and ignominiously expelled the spirit of the flesh, it must next thrust out those lesser causes of tumult and confusion which never fail to work their way into the heart. These are all such distracting images as arise from being too deeply engrossed in external affairs, and especially from being busied with matters which in no way concern us. Hence, the necessity for withdrawing ourselves, as far, at least, as our duties will permit, from the worry, the preoccupation, and the excitement inseparable from worldly business; also, for never suffering ourselves to be made slaves unto the exigencies of our social position. For, no matter how imperatively necessary the duties of that position may seem to us to be, they must be forced to give place to those which we owe to God and to ourselves; for, these duties are of far greater moment.

Again; it is all important that we should rid ourselves of that prurient disease of curiosity which lays hold of certain minds with a grasp so tenacious that it becomes a dangerous passion. Like the she-wolf, ravenous and lean, barring Dante's way up the mountain path, 'it is filled with wants innumerable.'[1] It must hear everything; it must see everything; it must busy itself about everything. To be present where something is either being said or done of which it is not cognisant, is unto it a positive torture. When it does seize hold of that which it is so greedy to know, it must straightway set forth to communicate it to someone else, to talk of it, to analyse, to dissect it, and to waste the energies of the soul in endless surmises and baseless theories of the possible issues that may arise out of it. Anyone who is on fire with a malady like this can no more be at rest and await in tranquillity the manifestation of

[1] Inferno, Canto I.

God, than a man whose frame is parched with a raging fever can prevent himself from wearily turning and tossing upon his uneasy couch. How, then, can he hope to catch the accents and to profit by the lessons of that Spirit of God, Who is never to be found in commotion and unrest?—'non in commotione Dominus.' These must be made to cease, the heat of this fever must be cooled, the prurience of the malady must be appeased, and then the soul will listen to the internal Guide and become docile to His voice.

But this is not all. Something more yet remains to be done; for, the false teacher always has in his train a following of minor passions to applaud and to support his teaching. When the Holy Spirit lifts up His voice to speak, these invariably raise a clamour, just as a body of brawlers hired for the purpose are accustomed to do at public meetings, when measures are discussed which are not pleasing to their leaders. These minor passions are all such affections to creatures as spiritual writers would call 'inordinate'—that is to say, affections not kept within the bounds of right reason. Of this nature are ambition to fill certain offices of trust and certain posts of honour, anger, impatience, melancholy, fear, and the like. If, then, the soul wishes to attend to the Holy Spirit, it must first impose silence upon these, and the most efficacious means for so doing is to cast them out of the soul. By their removal the soul will acquire that docility of heart which will keep it on the alert to catch the faintest utterance of the Divine Spirit of God, and make it ever ready to carry into effect His slightest wish.

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## SECTION IV.

### MOTIVES FOR DOCILITY.

THRICE blessed is he who walks the way of God's commandments, animated with these dispositions, for, they will

secure for him a title-deed to the possession of heavenly glory, signed and sealed by the hand of Him Whose will cannot be gainsaid. But though that spirit of docility, which will win this for him, is an inestimable good and well worthy of all the labour and the pain which men may expend upon its acquisition, yet the human will is so sluggish and indifferent, that it needs something to rouse up and to call forth its energy, otherwise it will never be able to lay hold of that which is unquestionably hedged round with many and serious difficulties. We venture, therefore, to suggest one or two motives which will, very probably, be productive of so desirable an effect.

In the first place, the attainment of relative perfection, at which all men without exception are bound to aim, depends upon the docility with which the soul follows out the instructions of the Holy Ghost. For, it is with perfection as with the arts and the sciences which men desire to acquire for their own gratification and emolument. They cannot be perfectly learnt, nor can their principles be grasped in their entirety, by the feeble and blundering efforts of the pupil only. A master is needed to instruct him, to give him tools, and to teach him how to use them. The master's duty is to encourage, to spur on, to point out defects, and to correct them. He stands over the easel of the aspiring artist and shows him where his landscape is out of perspective, or his figures are disproportioned, or his colouring is faulty. If the professor is teaching science, he points out where the pupil is wrong in his calculation, or in his combination of various elements, or in his analysis of materials. If the pupil be inattentive to the instruction and the guidance of his master, or if he be so proud as to think himself possessed of knowledge and skill sufficient to dispense with the master's services, he will fall into endless mistakes; he will never produce a perfect work; he will expose himself to the scorn and the ridicule of the world before which he wishes to pose either as an artist of merit, or as a scientific man, whose knowledge is so extensive

and so accurate that it may be relied upon with unbounded trust.

It is thus also with the man that aspires to Christian perfection; he cannot hope to acquire it, unless he gives an attentive ear to that great Master, the Divine Spirit, Who instructs the humble, and moves them to practise those virtues by which perfection is gained. The elements of the science which He teaches are purity of heart, charity, and humility. To cleanse the heart from its impurity, there is requisite a keenness of vision which will search into every recess, and fold, and cunning hiding-place, in which the smallest faults and the most trivial defects may lie hidden away. To love God as He should be loved, the soul must know how to read the record of His perfections; to be humble, it must be able to penetrate through the thick folds in which self-love is able to wrap and veil itself. Now, does the human soul possess that eagle glance which will do all this? No; it needs a brilliant light to enable it even to see its own shortcomings, to read the record of God's mercies traced on the tablets of the heart, and also an experienced guide or master to help it to unfold and cast aside the multifarious coverings which hide its true self from itself. Its heart, which has to be adorned with purity, is like a chamber from which the light has been excluded, in which the accumulated dust of years is lying thick upon hangings, furniture, and objects of art, disfiguring some of them, and slowly eating its way into and spoiling others The householder has been accustomed to enter it from time to time, but he is quite unconscious of the process of disfigurement and of destruction which is going on. He knows that his property is lying there, and that fact seems to suffice for him. He knows not what he is losing, because he has not the light to perceive it. But let him throw open the shutters, let him lift up the casement, and suffer the bright sun to pour in its cheerful rays, and what a spectacle meets his eyes! He is filled with consternation; he hastens away to order his servants to clear off the disfiguring dust;

to brush away the network of cobwebs; to shake out the colonies of moths luxuriating in his carpets and curtains; and to remove the murky covering which has begrimed and veiled the glories of his valuable pictures.

Now, it is the Holy Ghost that brings the brilliant light of His own divine presence into the soul, and gives to the eyes of the intelligence power to see by that light the work which must be done. He makes manifest to it all the glorious gifts and precious graces which He has bestowed upon it, and which, through inattention to His voice, have been lying there, as in a dungeon, uncared for, and consequently fast hastening to destruction. He points out what has to be done; and it is by docility to His instructions that the soul is enabled, in the first place, to see what it has to do, and in the next, how to set about the doing of it. By Him it is assisted in the work—in the science of perfection—in cleansing its heart, and under His tuition and in obedience to His guidance, it will succeed not only in learning, but in building upon its learning that perfection to which it is bound to tend. Therefore, the knowledge and the conviction that the attainment of perfection depends upon docility to this Divine Spirit, ought to be a very powerful motive with every man to rouse up all the energy that is in him, and to make him strive to gain that which will secure for him the subordinate aim of his existence.

A second and no less stirring motive for this energetic action, is the thrilling thought that, not only perfection, but even salvation itself, depends upon docility to the Holy Spirit. For, He is to us not only a master in the spiritual art or science—call it which you please—but a trusty guide in the steep, intricate, the narrow ascent of the mountain of the Lord. Who shall go up into that mountain? Only those men that follow the lead of the Divine Guide, for only they are able to acquire that purity of heart which enables them to scale its dangerous ascents: 'Quis ascendet in montem Domini! Innocens manibus et mundo

corde.'[1] Scarcely a year passes by without giving us a very startling and practical lesson on the absolute necessity for this close attention and obedience to our Guide. We cannot fail to have read, over and over again, of the terrible accidents which have befallen our adventurous countrymen in their ascents of the glaciers and the mountain heights of Switzerland. Many of these accidents have been the result of their foolhardiness, in dispensing with the services of a guide, or, when they have taken one with them, in culpably neglecting his oft-repeated directions and warnings. The consequence is that they miss the path, get into dangerous places, and they are punished for their folly, by being plunged headlong down some sheer descent, or by being swept into the yawning abyss by the down-rushing of some mass of melting snow.

A similar misfortune must almost necessarily befall those who, in the ascent of the mountain of God, close their ears to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and make no account of His direction. Nor is this to be wondered at; for, by keeping out of sight, and out of earshot of this heavenly Guide, they miss the magical influence of His grace which keeps alive within them the glowing fire of spiritual fervour. They grow cold and faint-hearted, as St. Peter did, when he followed Our Lord 'afar off.' Having no consolation from the Divine Spirit, they begin to fasten their affections upon creatures. They become attached to persons and to things that lead them into a multitude of faults and venial sins; their hearts are filled with desires which are never subjected to the chastening influence of Christian mortification, and thus, by little and little, the fire of charity is suffered to burn out. They lose fervour and zeal; they grow disgusted with their spiritual life, with prayer, with holy reading, and with the other practices of piety. Every day they settle down more and more into a carnal, worldly life, and consequently lose more and more spiritual strength, till at last there assails them some grievous

[1] Ps. xxiii. 3, 4.

temptation which, because of their infidelity to grace, they do not resist. They fall, and having fallen once, they sometimes, alas! do not care to rise from their wretched state.

How often are we reminded of these spiritual catastrophes, when we read of the wreck of some noble steamer out upon the high seas! The survivors tell how, being too heavily laden, the mighty vessel could not rise rapidly enough to disengage herself from the deluge of waters which burst continually over her. The fires were extinguished by the invading billows, and the vessel, thus deprived of force to breast the stormy ocean, lay at the mercy of the waves, till at last she was swallowed in the ravenous maw of the mighty deep.

From what has been said, it will be seen that in the spiritual life, the Holy Spirit is the internal Guide of the soul and from that fact the necessity for attending to His divine guidance follows as a natural consequence. But lest the soul should become the puppet of its own imagination and fall into dangerous paths, we pointed out certain means by which it may distinguish the suggestions of that heavenly Guide from the illusions of its own fancy or of the spirit of evil who is able to transform himself into an Angel of light, and we proved beyond dispute that submission to the Holy Ghost cannot interfere with the obedience due to all lawfully constituted authority. Finally, we suggested certain means by which the soul may acquire this virtue of docility, and also some motives which will incite it to labour earnestly in the acquisition of docility.

To these various means for the attainment of docility, we may add one other which cannot be dispensed with, and that other is fervent and incessant prayer; for, God has promised the good spirit to those who ask it. If our prayer be humble and persevering, the Holy Ghost will come to us and take up His abode in our hearts. He will give us wisdom to lead upon this earth, the life of Angels, and by so doing to have a foretaste of the happiness awaiting us in

heaven. He will enlighten us with a knowledge superior to that of earth, inasmuch as it points out to us our own weakness, the paths which lead to our true country, and the frauds of the devil who wishes to cheat us and to lead us astray. In doubts and perplexities He will bestow upon us the gift of understanding, which will dissipate all clouds, and put an end to sluggishness in believing, in hoping, and in loving. He will suggest to us, by the gift of His heavenly counsel, the means by which we shall be able, even in the midst of dangerous occasions of sin, to escape the destruction impending over us. By His gift of fortitude, He will so strengthen the natural faint-heartedness and timidity which, on occasions like these, make our souls well-nigh give way to despair, that they will rise superior to opposing difficulties. By His gift of piety, He will soften our hearts and make them pliable to good, tender towards those who are in distress, and to those who have wrought us much mischief. Lastly, by filling those hearts with a reverential fear of God, He will keep under control the spirit of pride ever stirring within them and striving for the mastery. For, when we consider the secret and dreadful judgment of God, we shall be filled with humility by the thought that He judges men not by the things which outwardly appear, but by the things which are hidden deep in the secret folds of conscience.

# CHAPTER XXIV.

## *IMITATION OF CHRIST.*

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## SECTION I.

### HOW WE ARE TO IMITATE CHRIST.

WE are so constituted that our mind is able to form a more vivid conception of what it perceives by means of sight, than of what it has cognisance only through the sense of hearing. For, that which falls beneath the eye's quick glance goes straight to the intelligence, instinct with life and vigour. It is taken in there; it is firmly grasped. It has a power to rouse up and to move, of which those things are in great measure shorn, which reach it only after a laborious effort of the fancy to represent some notion of them to the eyes of the soul. This was the reason to which one of the shrewdest observers that graced the Imperial Court of Augustus attributed the superiority which scenic representations have always had over written poems; they more speedily reach the mind, they more deeply touch the soul.[1] To the same cause we may assign the mighty influence which example has upon the minds and the hearts of men. It rivets their attention, it moves their will, it induces them to imitate what they are able to see. There is, in point of fact, as much difference between the impression

[1] Segniùs irritant animos demissa per aurem,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, et quæ
Ipse sibi tradit spectator.

Horat., Ars Poet.

left upon us by what we have seen, and the impression left upon us by what we have heard, as there is between the idea which we bear away with us of some glorious masterpiece of art, before which we have stood entranced with admiration, and the notion which we should be able to form of it from the glowing description of an appreciative critic, who should do his utmost, by minute description, to convey to our minds the beauties which he had drunk in with his own eyes.

Therefore, it is not surprising, that He Who fashioned the heart of man should have taken up this means and employed it with such telling effect, to move that heart to its lowest depths. He sent His only begotten Son, not only to redeem men, but to give them an example which they might imitate. Jesus Christ was in the world to teach them how to live. He is the way, the truth, and the life;[1] hence, when He gathered men around Him, and wished to influence them and move their hearts to deny themselves, to take up the Cross and to follow Him,[2] He began first to do and then to teach.[3] He stood before the eyes of all as the model which they were to copy; and on that day when He came up out of the waters of the Jordan, a voice was heard from heaven bidding all men look upon Him as their Master: 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him.'[4] Hence, the frequent admonitions of the great Apostle 'to put on the Lord Jesus Christ,'[5] and his zealous endeavours to form in the hearts of his disciples a perfect image of Him Whom he loved so well. Writing to the Ephesians, he exhorts them 'to be imitators of God as most dear children.'[6] Therefore, to imitate Christ is one of the great instruments of which we are invited to make use in order to attain perfection. Of a truth, the study to become an exact counterpart of Jesus Christ is the chief business in life of him who calls himself a Christian: 'Sequatur

[1] St. John xiv. 6. [2] St Matt. xvi. 24. [3] Acts i. 1.
[4] St Matt. xvii. 5. [5] Rom. xiii. 14. [6] Ephes. v. 1.

Christum' is the precept given to us by our holy Father St. Benedict, as the surest and the most expeditious way of accomplishing that work for which we left the world.

How, then, are we to imitate Christ? By cultivating what virtues shall we imitate Him? What motives should animate us in the performance of this, our life's chief work? It is with these questions that we are about to deal in this chapter, and the answer which we shall give to each of them will fully explain this important instrument of the spiritual art.

We say, then, that it ought to be the chief aim of every man's life to become a living representative of Jesus Christ. The Saviour should be to him what a model is to the sculptor or the painter. If we visit the studios in which these men of genius are slowly and patiently elaborating their conceptions, we shall always find their model standing before them. On that model they frequently cast their eyes, and by following it with scrupulous exactitude, they endeavour to transfer to their canvas, or to embody in their marble, all the excellence which they perceive in it. In the same way Jesus Christ must be kept before our mind's eye while we are endeavouring to reproduce in ourselves a living image of that most excellent Master. Now, as the aim of a true artist is not so much to represent the outward pose of his model as to catch and transfer to his canvas the soul's character which sparkles in the ever-varying expression of the countenance, so it should be the aim of a Christian to copy the internal virtue of Jesus, rather than the external dignity and quiet self-possession which distinguished His every movement, and which were but so many rays of light streaming forth from the glowing fire burning so brightly within. To assume the outward show of His virtues, is an easy matter—as easy as it is to put on a garment. The chief difficulty is, to be that which we seem to be. The aim, therefore, of every one should be 'to put on Christ' in such a way as to have both His internal spirit, and the outward carriage of His adorable person.

Internally to resemble Christ is to think as He thought.

In His eyes God was everything; the chief, the only object really worthy of the attention and the pursuit of a rational creature. All things else were but so much dross, except in as far as they might help to fix the heart's affections upon the all-great, all-important Good. It is to judge of things as He judged of them. Men of the world judge very differently from Jesus Christ, because their thoughts are not as His thoughts, nor are their ways as His ways. They shrink from poverty; they seek to be free and untrammelled in their lives and actions; they sneer at chastity; they flee from the house of mourning; they run to the abode of joy; they deem it a more blessed thing to possess than to give; and yet Jesus chose poverty, and willed to be obedient even unto death, and called the clean of heart and those who mourn 'blessed,' and declared it to be a better thing to give than to receive. Again; to be like Christ is to love what He loved, and to hold in abhorrence what He despised. Therefore, to think, and to judge, and to love as Jesus loved and judged and thought, is internally to resemble Him.

When this has been effected, to mould the external man into the likeness of what Our Lord outwardly appeared to be, will not present much difficulty. For, the outward deportment of men is usually only a reflection of their inward disposition. Just as a garment follows the shape of the body, so does the body follow the character of the soul which dwells within it. If it does not always do so, it is because the soul pretends to be what it is not. But when a man is bold enough to throw off all disguise, when he dares to be, in the eyes of the world, what he is in his own eyes and in the eyes of God, he can no more prevent his body from manifesting the character of his soul than a tree can hinder itself from being known by its fruit. Therefore, in the case, of those who have endeavoured, and who have successfully endeavoured, internally to put on Christ, it will follow, as a natural consequence, that their external behaviour will, in its measure and its degree, resemble that of Christ. It will be grave, modest, charitable, and benig-

nant. It will have about it such a charm, that the hearts of men will be drawn to them, and then will be softened, and compelled to walk in the ways in which they perceive that these courageous imitators of Christ have followed the Divine Master and Teacher. As He behaved with His Apostles, they will behave with those with whom their lot in life is cast, no matter whether these are their Superiors, or their fellow-workers and equals. If anyone wishes to know, in detail, what was the conduct of that Divine Model amid the shifting scenes and vicissitudes of His daily life, he must seek for it in the pages of Holy Writ, in which Christ's deeds are recorded for our instruction. Let him thoughtfully revolve these in his mind, and he will form for himself a sufficiently accurate idea both of the internal and of the external life which the God-Man led upon earth. This idea will enable him to set Christ before himself as a model, Whose excellences he must copy into the actions of his everyday life.

## SECTION II.

### HOW WE ARE TO IMITATE CHRIST.

ALL this, however, is very general, and like all that is general, it is not pointed enough to make a very deep impression upon our dulled intellects and sluggish wills. Therefore, some of the most prominent features in Our Lord's character must be selected and set out clearly before our intelligence as definite and distinct objects at which we are to gaze, and to endeavour to copy them into our souls. Chief among these is the virtue of humility. In a former chapter, speaking of this virtue, we said : 'It is one of those, the office of which is to put a bridle on the mind, and prevent it from tending immoderately to great things above itself. From these words it will be evident how incongruous it is

to predicate such a virtue of a Divine Person Who is greatness itself; over Whom there is nothing either higher or holier, to which He may stretch forth the desires of His mind; in Whom there can be nothing badly regulated; Who is, in fine, all that the grandest intellect can say of Him, and much more besides, which it is impossible for any created intelligence to express or to conceive. Nevertheless, though it is so utterly incompatible with the divine nature to be humble, in our sense of the word, yet God in His omnipotence, devised a means by which to humble Himself. This was to assume human nature by becoming man, by making Himself lowly like the least among us. Consider attentively, and let the ideas contained in the sublime opening of St. John's Gospel sink down slowly into the mind, and the depth of Christ's humiliation will then begin to open itself out before you. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.....And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.'[1] God, Who is from eternity, Who is without beginning, Who made all things, Who is life, and light,and energy, and power, came into the world which was made by Him; came to His own; came in human flesh; true man as well as true God; yet He was ignored by them and rejected! This is humility which is infinite, because it is the humility of God. It is complete, it is lasting; for the manhood which Our Lord assumed is His now, and it will be His for all eternity.

This is a degree of lowliness to which we can never descend; it is the model from which God wishes us to copy. Also, the great Apostle, with the same end in view, makes use of the Incarnation as an argument to persuade us to

[1] St. John i. 1-13.

esteem our neighbour more than we esteem ourselves, and willingly to submit ourselves to him, as if he were our Superior. But knowing full well the strong opposition which any excellence either fancied or real, on our part, would throw in the way of such self-abasement, he puts forward for our imitation the example of Christ, Who, though He is God, and equal to God, and infinitely above all creatures, did not, on account of His pre-eminence, seek the honours of the world, but—to use the strong figure of the Apostle—*emptied* Himself of His Divinity, not, indeed, by putting it off, but by concealing and hiding it under the form of a servant, and in that form obeying the decrees of the Eternal Father and the wishes of men, even unto the cruel death of the Cross: 'Let there be in you towards one another that mind or feeling, which was in Christ Jesus towards us all; Who though God in form and nature, did not esteem that fact as something to be made much of, but *emptied* Himself, and from being everything, reduced Himself, as it were, to nothing, by freely taking upon Himself the nature of a slave, thereby likening Himself in nature, in appearance, and in external figure, to any, even to the meanest of the sons of men.'[1] In that lowly state, He endured all the helplessness of infancy. He grew up to boyhood and subjected Himself in all things to the guidance of His Eternal Father. With the meek and lowly St. Joseph, He worked at a menial trade, and gained His livelihood in the sweat of His brow, as if the heavy penance imposed upon Adam and his posterity was due to Him also. When at last, at the time preordained by His Eternal Father, He came before men to preach to them the good tidings of salvation, His lowliness and humility shone forth with even greater splendour. His divine power was never exercised for the mere purpose of display, but only to promote the grand object of His mission on earth, and to prove the divinity of it to a stiff-necked and unbelieving generation. Often enough, when He had performed some work of divine

[1] Piconio: Triplex Exposit. in Philip., Cap. ii. 5, 8.

power, at which the spectators were in amaze, He strictly charged them not to make known what He had done, in order that He might thus, even in those things which are far above our reach, teach us that lesson of humility which it is so necessary for us to learn. Hence, He could say to all generations of men: 'Learn of Me to be humble of heart.'

Closely allied to humility is another great virtue which was practised in a very special way by Our divine Lord. This is the virtue of holy poverty, which we select out of a crowd of others, as being particularly necessary for Religious. To live a life of poverty is one of the essential conditions of their State, for, they are obliged not only to aim at the virtue of poverty, which consists in weaning the affections from wealth and worldly possessions, but actually to divest themselves of all dominion over this property and to hold nothing as their own. The reason of this is, that they are living in a state of life in which men are bound to aim at perfection, although they may never here below actually arrive at it. For, though all men are bound to do this, even though they are not enrolled among the members of any Religious Order, yet the measure of perfection looked for at their hands is not so great as that expected from those who make profession of Religious Life. Hence, when Our Lord was asked by the young man, 'What must I do to obtain eternal life?' Jesus answered, 'Keep the commandments;' and when the youth replied that he had done so from his earliest years, Our Lord added: 'If thou wilt be *perfect*, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come follow Me.'[1] By these words He drew a sharp distinction between those who keep the commandments, and those who observe the counsels also, by *actually*, and not in *spirit* only, renouncing wealth, and living a life such as Christ lived, that is to say, by adding to their poverty, chastity and obedience.

Poverty, therefore, being one of the essentials of Reli-

[1] St. Matt. xix. 21.

gious Life, the practice of it must, of necessity, be a matter of the first importance to those who have left all things to follow Our Lord. How this is to be done, will best be learnt from a careful study of the poverty of Him, 'Who, whereas He was rich, for our sakes became poor.'[1] By fixing their eyes upon Him, Religious will learn in what esteem He held that which is so repulsive to men, that they flee from it if they can, and admit it to their homes only as a most unwelcome guest, of whose presence they rid themselves as speedily as possible. Also, they will see how lovingly He accepted and endured the privations and the inconveniences which ever follow in its train.

In the first place, then, they will observe that Christ is the only one that ever had the choice of His own parents. It was in His power to have selected whomsoever He pleased. Therefore, He might, have been born of those who were wealthy; but here we see the first indication of His love of poverty, by which love He makes known to men the worthlessness of that wealth which is nearly always the bane of their lives, and sometimes the cause of their damnation. He chose two whose station in life was lowly, and who gained their daily bread by honourable toil. In the next place, He made choice of the locality in which He was to enter the outward world of men; and He so timed and arranged circumstances that it was impossible for His holy Mother to procure a suitable resting-place wherein He might be born: 'He came to His own, and His own received Him not.' It was, therefore, in a cave that was used as a stable for cattle that the God-man chose to appear, for the first time, in the world which His Almighty hand had made. What poverty was there! What an absence of all those comforts and conveniences which even the poorest are able to command! This was not to be a solitary instance of poverty, which even the poorest do not suffer. His after life was in keeping with this, its wretched beginning. It

[1] 2 Cor. viii. 9.

is true that the poverty of Our Lord was not that abject, ragged, filthy poverty which fills us with horror when it thrusts 'its miscreated front athwart our way.' Nevertheless, it was a poverty that was real, and that made its wants felt most keenly. He lived as those live who gain their livelihood by honest toil; and there can be no doubt that at times both Our Lord Himself and the holy pair to whose guidance and keeping the Eternal Father had committed Him, knew by sad experience what it is to want a little bread. For thirty years He lived in obscurity, and for a considerable portion of that time He must have been the sole support of His Virgin Mother, as it is generally supposed that St. Joseph died while Our Lord was yet a mere youth.

At last the time came when He was to manifest Himself to the world. He appeared before His fellow-countrymen as a great teacher, as a new light, as One Who spoke with heaven-inspired authority. Yet this did not make any difference in His manner of life. He did not begin to acquire wealth, as He might so easily have done. He continued to live in poverty. He accepted the charity of those who believed in Him; and, as if to foreshadow the life which He wished those to lead who should give up all things to follow Him, He appointed one of the Twelve to keep their slender purse, and to supply from that scanty store the simple wants of the austere community. Those whom He selected to carry His doctrine to the world were neither wealthy nor of high estate. They were the poor, honest, hard-working fishermen of the Galilean lake. His injunctions to them give us a notion of the love which He had for poverty: 'Go ye to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils.' These were mighty works. They would draw upon them the attention, the respect, the honour, and the gratitude of men. Riches would pour in upon them, but the great lover of poverty goes on to say: 'Freely have

ye received, freely give. Do not possess gold, or silver, or money in your purse, or scrip for your journey, or two coats, or shoes, or a staff, for the workman is worthy of his meat.'[1] How faithfully they complied with these injunctions may be seen by anyone who will read the history of their labours as they are portrayed for us in the pages of the Acts, and in the letters which they wrote for the instruction of those whom they had brought to the light of truth. Each of them could say of himself, as St. Paul did: 'Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these I am content.'[2]

Therefore, as the whole life of Jesus was a life of poverty, it is but natural that His death should not be out of harmony with that which had gone before. As He lived poor, so also did He die poor. Look at Him as He hangs upon the Cross, to which a proud and fanatical priesthood has fastened Him! He is stripped of everything. His garments have been torn off and appropriated by the soldiers. These garments were His sole earthly possessions; and while He was dying, the ruffians who had accomplished the work which the priests would have gladly performed with their own hands, sat upon the ground beneath Him and cast lots 'whose they should be.'

But He suffered Himself to be stripped of a species of wealth, from which even the poorest will not loose their hold, except with life itself. By calumny, and perjured speech, and misrepresentation, the honour in which He was held by the people was grievously shattered, if not totally wrecked; the credit which He had enjoyed among the people was gone; His friends likewise were gone, fleeing in terror from that savage, vindictive spirit, which had made such a mockery and scorn of their Master; nay, even that heavenly consolation which had flooded His heart with joy and refreshed His overburthened spirit, was now withdrawn, so that in His agony of woe unutterable, He cried out: 'My God, My God, why hast *Thou* forsaken Me?' When we look at this picture of a God-Man, dying and dead, upon the infamous

[1] St. Matt. x. 7. [2] 1 Tim. vi. 8.

gibbet of the Cross, it becomes for us the most persuasive teacher of that poverty which Our Lord took to Himself as His bride. It bids us esteem and love poverty as He esteemed and loved it. It enables us to be glad and rejoice when we feel the pain and the privations accompanying poverty. It makes us eager to practise poverty, though we may not be called upon by vow or by our state of life to do so, in order thereby to liken ourselves to Him Who for our sake became poor. It causes us to curtail our expenses; to avoid luxury in dress, in food, in surroundings; in a word, to detach our affections from that from which we must, perforce, withdraw them at no very distant day, and to endeavour to be poor, at least in spirit, if we cannot be poor in reality.

Of the example of chastity which Our Lord gives us we need say very little. We have but to remember that He is God as well as Man; and consequently that in His human nature there dwells corporally that all-holy Being, before Whose resplendent sanctity the mighty Cherubim who stand before the throne of God, veil their faces and bow down in trembling adoration and awe. One glance, also, at the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of her who was destined from all eternity to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word, will serve to give us some idea of the notion which the Church would have us form of the chastity of Our Lord. In defining this article of our faith, she teaches us that, in order to prepare a fitting Mother for His co-eternal consubstantial Word, the Eternal Father, in view of and in virtue of the redemption to be wrought by the passion and the death of that adorable Son, exempted her from the original stain which sullies the purity of every other child of Adam, and endowed her with such graces and favours, that the Angel commissioned to bear God's message to her and to receive her consent to be the Mother of His Son was able to say to her: 'Hail! full of grace, the Lord is with thee;' and to tell her that she was chosen to be the Mother of the Most High God. Yet, when addressing

Christ, and admiring His condescension in being born of one so favoured, so spotlessly pure, and so far raised above all other creatures, the Church sings in her liturgy: 'Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.'[1] For, what is any created sinlessness or sanctity when compared with the uncreated sanctity of God? This holiness, this purity, is in Jesus Christ. In the days of His mortal life it shone through His human body, and filled with an undefinable awe, men who did not believe in His Divinity. His enemies dared to accuse Him of everything except of that which would have cast a shadow upon His purity and chastity. 'Which of you,' He once cried out in the midst of His bitterest foes, 'which of you shall convince Me of sin?' and the abashed cavillers were hushed into silence, or if they spoke, it was to accuse Him of trivialities at which the most scrupulous would have raised a scornful laugh. He is, therefore, the model to which we poor sinners must turn, when we wish to learn how to clothe our hearts in those spotless garments which will procure for us an entrance into the banqueting hall of everlasting peace.

If this incomparable holiness of Our Lord seems to be too far above our reach to be imitated—except, indeed, at an infinite distance—there is, at least, one other of His virtues which is more easy of access, and which may, therefore, be studied and imitated with less chance of failure. This is the virtue of obedience which Our Lord loved and practised throughout His whole life. From all eternity it was decreed in the councils of God that the Word should become man and die for the race which the Almighty foreknew would rebel against Him. Therefore as man, the Word came into the world, and by that wondrous act of the Incarnation which constituted Him a man, He subjected Himself by lowly obedience so unreservedly to the Almighty Father, as to practise this virtue even to the death of the Cross. He died through obedience; and though St. Thomas teaches that it was

[1] The Te Deum, Non horruisti virginis uterum.

through charity that He gave up His life, yet this conclusion in no way militates against what we have said; because His obedience proceeded from the love which He had for His Father and for us, which love may therefore, be considered to have been the cause of His death. But it was not one solitary act of obedience that accomplished our redemption. The virtue which He loved so well and practised with so much heroism and self-annihilation, is too fundamental and necessary a one to have been taught by one act. No; the obedience of Our Saviour was a life-long obedience. He never spoke a truer word than when He said: 'I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me.'[1]

That will He accomplished in every action of His human life. In the Emperor who ordered the census of the Jewish people, on account of which His parents were obliged to go to Bethlehem, Our Lord saw and obeyed the will of His Eternal Father, Who had decreed that that spot should be Christ's birthplace. He recognised and obeyed that same divine will in the Angel who by night appeared to Joseph, and bade him arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt. In returning thence, at the appointed time, He accomplished another wish of His Eternal Father. Why did He yield an entire and ready obedience to Joseph and to Mary? Because by obeying them, He was obeying God. Hence after staying behind in Jerusalem, and for three days being lost to His parents, He did not refuse to return with them when they discovered Him in the Temple. He went down with them to Nazareth, and there, in the deepest obscurity, for the next eighteen years lived in the practice of obedience. 'This virtue of His hidden life came out prominently, also, in His actions during those three brilliant years when He shone in all the splendour of the long-looked-for Messias. To every requirement of the Mosaic Law, He gave the most willing obedience; and the Civil Power found in Him One Who acknowledged

[1] St. John vi. 38.

its claims upon the obedience of its subjects, within the limits of its jurisdiction; for, He Himself, through St Peter, paid the tribute-money which it required. When the time of His sacrifice had come, He was obedient, although His whole human nature shrank from the fearful suffering which that submission cost Him. He was obedient to the unjust sentence of His judges; He was obedient to the soldiers and to the executioners who carried out the sentence of the Law; He stretched forth His hands for the nails; His side was bared for the lance; He bowed His head and died, in obedience to the eternal decree. He was obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.'[1]

Such, then are the prominent virtues which shine forth in the character of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Like the principal figures in some great masterpiece of art whereon the painter has expended all the wealth of his genius, they stand out before us, throwing into shade all minor details, riveting our attention, and drawing from our lips the well merited expression of our admiration and our praise.

## SECTION III.

### MOTIVES WHICH WILL URGE US TO IMITATE.

BUT this is not all that God looks for. Something far more real than empty lip-service is required from those who bear the glorious name 'Christians or followers of Christ.' They must endeavour to imitate what they admire and praise. In this imitation, however, lies all the difficulty. Obedience, chastity, humility, and poverty, are virtues which all men are ready enough to extol when they behold them in other men. But they shrink back, as children shrink from nauseous medicine, when it is said to them: 'Let these virtues find a lasting home in your hearts.' They do not wish to give up their own will; or to curb the proud

[1] Lectures for Boys, Vol. I, Sacred Heart, p. 509.

aspirings of their souls after honour and distinction; or to deny the cravings of their animal nature; or to contemn that wealth which makes life so pleasant, and soft, and delightful. They lack something which will brace up the flaccid muscles of their will, and give them strength to take up and to bear off with them those virtues which have extorted their admiration. This something is a motive powerful enough to break down the opposition of the flesh and make even those who do not leave all things to follow Christ, divest themselves of them, at least in spirit, and to be as if they possessed them not. But what reasons that we can give, will have in them strength for a task so difficult, when the express command of God Himself is not powerful enough to deter men from transgressing His ordinances? We know not; and, therefore, it is with some diffidence that we suggest a few motives which may possibly seem very weak to those who are not accustomed to think, and who, consequently, are not able to perceive their force; nevertheless, to those who take the trouble prayerfully and before God to reflect upon them, they are not without a certain vigour, which exercises a healthful pressure upon the will.

First among these comes the great fact that in a most public and solemn manner, the Eternal Father declared it to be His will that Jesus Christ should be the teacher and guide of men in the ways of God: 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.'[1] Now, what is it to hear Him unless it is to follow His precepts, and by so doing, to conform ourselves with His likeness? For, Christ never taught anything that He Himself did not first practise. Hence it is that, by an exact obedience to what He teaches, men are moulded into the likeness of Jesus Christ. For this reason we may add that Our Lord Himself, as the heaven-sent teacher, the visible, consubstantial, divine image of the invisible God, repeatedly calls upon men to look upon Him as a model and to imitate

[1] St. Matt. xvii.

Him: 'Learn of Me,' He says, 'to be meek and humble of heart; to be poor in spirit; to be chaste; to be obedient,' and the rest. But how will men, whose eyes are dazzled by the false glitter of earthly goods, be able to see these virtues in Jesus Christ, and having seen them, to deem them worthy of their imitation? By turning their eyes to Him Who is the light of the world, in Whose light men are able to see light, and also the darkness in which they are enveloped. How will they be able to believe that what is so repugnant to sense, is really as salutary as it is said to be? By going to Him Who is the truth. How can the practice of what that truth teaches be anything but a species of living death? Because it is called our true life by Him Who is the life. Is there not, then, any easier way to heaven and to God than by this rugged path bristling with opposing difficulties? No; it must be by likening ourselves to Jesus Christ: 'No one cometh to the Father except by Me.'[1]

To Him, therefore, we must go; and the necessity for so doing is, after all, a sweet one; for, no other teacher is possessed of qualities such as He can show, to win over the human heart, to captivate its love, and thereby to induce it, as it were unconsciously to imitate and entirely to devote itself to Him. For, the teacher who would win so great influence over the souls of his scholars as to fill them, not only with the desire of learning, but with the will to put that learning into practice, must be able to attract them by the gentleness of his character; he must be able to command their respect by the holiness of his life; and lastly, by the wisdom which he displays, he must make them receive with unhesitating faith the lessons which he inculcates. Now, what other teacher has ever possessed in their plenitude such qualifications for moving the hearts of men to imitate, as Our Lord Jesus Christ possesses? He is so gentle, so kind, so considerate—and these characteristics of His heart shone forth so conspicuously in His divine Person, that even

[1] St. John xiv. 6.

little children were never afraid to be near Him. They were drawn to Him by the charming attractiveness of His manner. His sanctity is so great, that it is none other than the infinite holiness of the Godhead. His wisdom is the uncreated wisdom of God. It appeared so wonderful to the dim eyes and the clouded intellects of His hearers who saw in Him nothing more than a man, that they followed Him unweariedly for whole days together, hung spellbound upon the eloquent words which fell from His lips, and lifted up their voices in one loud cry of admiration, exclaiming: 'Never did man speak as this man!' Will not these qualifications in Our Master supply us with one motive the more to inspire us with zeal to imitate? If there is any enthusiasm in our natures, if there is any lofty sentiment in our hearts, any chord that thrills responsive to the touching examples of all virtue which the great Teacher puts before us in deed and in word, we must, perforce, yield ourselves up willing, obedient slaves to the moulding of His will. We must be to Him as sheep are to their shepherd. We must know Him, hear His voice, and follow Him whithersoever he goeth.

But if our hearts remain cold and dead to such motives as these, there is yet one other which, because it deeply interests each of us, will possibly be able to enkindle in them some spark of life. This is the generally received opinion, founded upon the teaching of St. Paul, that conformity in life and in manners with the model left us by Jesus Christ, is a sure sign of our predestination to heavenly glory. How often are the minds of earnest and religious men disturbed and harassed by the uncertainty in which they are forced to live, concerning the great future which lies beyond the grave! No man, except by a divine revelation, can know whether he is worthy of love or of hatred. All must plod along the weary way of life in dread misgiving as to the decision of the Almighty Judge, Who will weigh in the balance of divine justice whatsoever they have done, whether it is good or evil. All this dark foreboding may

be changed into joyous, moral certainty, if we will but make it our aim in life to conform ourselves with the image of Jesus Christ: 'Those whom He foreknew,' says the great Apostle, 'He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He may be the first-born among many brethren.'[1] From these inspired words of the Doctor of the Gentiles, it is evident, then, that unless men conform their lives here below with the life of Christ—that is to say, unless they live in their measure and degree as Jesus Christ lived, their hope of future bliss is empty and vain. His argument is a very simple one: 'God, in His infinite knowledge, knows beforehand those who will receive the graces which He freely offers to all. These, also, He chooses and calls, and by seconding their free will, makes them liken themselves to Jesus Christ and thereby puts upon them the seal of predestination.' The Prince of the Apostles encourages his converts, by the example of Our Lord, patiently to endure unjust persecutions, and his language clearly indicates that he considers the imitation of Christ, in this respect, as a key which will open to them the gate of heaven. Hence, he says: 'If, when you do well, you are, nevertheless, persecuted, look on this as worthy of thanks before God, for unto this are you called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.'[2]

To follow in His footsteps is be to like unto Him. Now as Christ is the *way*, we cannot fail to reach the kingdom; as He is the *light*, we cannot stumble on our journey; as He is the *truth*, we cannot err: 'He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness.' Hence, we may conclude that no one is destined to enjoy the glory which Christ has won for us by His life on earth, except the man who is made like to Christ in His passion and ignominy, by patiently suffering the unjust buffetings of the world or by bravely conquering the attacks of the spiritual world which wars against the soul. This is constantly urged upon our notice by the

[1] 1 Rom. viii. 29. [2] 1 St. Peter. ii. 21.

Sacred Scriptures which over and over again make a life such as Christ led, an essential condition for winning a glory such as He enjoys: 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him;'[1] 'if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with Him;'[2] 'if you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolations.'[3] St. Augustine, noticing the urgency with which this imitation of the life of Christ is inculcated, expresses his wonder at it, and says: 'What a marvel is this! Angels and men sinned and perished because they wished to be like unto God. But now the Son of God exhibits Himself to us for the express purpose of giving us a model by which we may make ourselves like unto God. If we do not liken ourselves unto Him, we sin and we are lost. His whole life was to teach us this lesson. Hence, there is no sin, except that which differs from His teaching; and thus His life has become the rule and the pattern of ours. Therefore, no one sins and perishes unless it is by loving that which He despised, and by despising that which he loved.'[4] Consequently, unto all those who with mad perversity, will not fashion their hearts upon the Divine Model thus lovingly provided for them, we cry out, as the Angel did in the Apocalypse: 'Woe unto the inhabitants of the earth,[5] who have not the sign of God on their foreheads.' Like the man who unadorned with the wedding garment presented himself at the marriage feast, they will be thrust forth from the brightly lighted hall into the dismal darkness of that nether prison where there are weeping and gnashing of teeth.

With these soul-stirring motives before our eyes, it will indeed be a marvel if we do not conform ourselves with that glorious pattern which Jesus has set before us. But how shall we do this? In other words, what means must we employ to fashion our hearts upon the model that has been shown unto us? They are manifold; but

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 12. [2] Rom. viii. 17. [3] 2. Cor. i. 7.
[4] St. Augustine Lib. de Catechis. rudibus, Cap. 12. [5] Apoc viii. 13., ix. 4.

some of the chief may be suggested, and these will suffice to give us an idea of the indispensable implements necessary for the work. As we have oftentimes remarked, the first step to be taken for the purpose of moving the will to act, is to enlighten it. It is a blind power, and it cannot love what it does not know. Therefore, in order to induce it to conform the whole man with the image of Christ, Christ must be brought before it, and it must be made to see Him and to know Him. This can be effected only by filling the intelligence with a vivid knowledge of His sacred life and character. Hence the necessity for frequent and deep meditation upon the pages of the Gospel, in which is written, in the inspired words of the Evangelists, all that we ought to know concerning that God-Man Who came to teach and to redeem us. There, we learn what He loved and what He rejected as unworthy of esteem; what He prized and what He contemned; what He aimed at and what He avoided. We shall see how He acted and how He suffered. His public life, His dealing with friends and with foes, with interested inquirers, and with indifferent onlookers, is before us. His private life, too, is revealed to us by occasional glimpses, so that a complete picture, a finished model is before our eyes. He who shall attentively fix his gaze upon it cannot fail to have his inmost heart stirred to its lowest depths. He cannot fail to admire and to love; and when his love has been stirred, imitation of what he loves will follow as naturally as water gushes up through the aperture pierced for its exit.

But though the imitation of Christ is brought about by knowledge begotten of meditation upon His life, and by love, the outcome of knowledge and of esteem, yet the root of all that impels men to copy the example set them by Our Lord, is *faith*, which sucks up into the otherwise lifeless and barren heart of man all the fatness and the richness of the deified human nature of Christ. For this reason it is that the Apostle says: 'The just man liveth

by faith.'[1] It must, however, be borne in mind that in these words, he does not speak of a faith or belief which has laid hold of the intelligence only, and compelled the assent of the reason to the dogmas, either propounded by the Church or enunciated in the Sacred Scriptures, but a faith which has taken possession of the will and has made it fertile in good works. A faith which does not do this is dead;[2] because it is not made to participate in or to have any communication with the life of Christ, Who is the fountain-head of our spiritual life. Therefore, a merely intellectual faith is as little able to produce good works, as a tree, the roots of which are not planted in the earth, is able to bear leaves and fruit. From this it will be seen that men are spiritually dead till Christ is formed in them; and that only that faith which has captivated the will as well as enlightened the intelligence, is living and life-giving; because it is the only kind of faith that unites us with Christ, and enables us to draw the sap of life from His precious blood, just as any shoot ingrafted upon the vine sucks into itself the life of the vine, and thereby lives by the life of the vine. In the same way, anyone ingrafted upon Christ by a living faith which not only has brought his understanding into captivity, but has moved his will to act, will share in the same movement of life that Christ has; will participate in the same spirit of life and in the same fruit of life, that He possesses. In other words, he will draw from Jesus, the true spiritual vine, grace—which is living movement; virtue—which is vital spirit; and good works—which are living fruit. In order, then, to live by faith, our hearts must be reformed by the grace of Jesus Christ, clothed with His virtues, and made fruitful in works such as He brought forth. Then we shall be able to say: 'I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.'[3]

It was for no other end that we were regenerated in the waters of baptism. Our nature, by means of divine grace, has again to be fashioned according to the likeness

[1] Heb. x. 38. [2] St. James ii. 20. [3] 2 Galat. ii. 20

of Christ. By its power we are to be enabled not to walk according to the corrupt instincts of nature, but to follow the movement and the leading of grace, and thus 'in Christ to become a new creature.'[1] It is to help us to strip ourselves of the old man and his deeds, and to put on the new man, that is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of Him that created him.[2] Consequently, the end or purpose of faith is to reform our life and morals. If the faith which is in a man does not effect this, it is not a faith that is living and life-giving; it is a dead faith. It does not ingraft us upon Christ; and because it does not, and because it cannot do this, it is barren in good works. If it were a living faith, it would make us like to Him. We should be His; we should be animated by His Spirit; for, they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences,'[3] and unless we are animated by that spirit we are none of His.[4] Therefore, by a living practice of faith we must be united with Christ, as closely, as intimately as a branch is with the parent trunk. His spirit will be diffused throughout our whole being, that spirit which Isaias says is one of wisdom, of fortitude, of piety, and of the fear of the Lord.[5]

Therefore, the imitation of Jesus Christ is one of the most powerful instruments that the soul can use for advancing itself in perfection. In Him, it has the great examplar whereon Almighty God wishes every man to be formed who shall be admitted to live in the courts of the eternal mansion. It is His will that they should fix their eyes on Christ's internal life, and make their own like unto it. In thought, in judgment, and in affection, they must aim at conforming themselves with Him; and then, in outward behaviour, also, they will show forth in their lives that gravity, that modesty, and that gracious benignity, which captivate all hearts. But chiefly they are to make a deep study of Christ's sweet humility; they must have His poverty, at least in

[1] 2 Cor. v. 17. [2] Colos. iii. 9. [3] Galat. v. 24.
[4] Rom. viii. 9 [5] Isai. xi. 2.

spirit, if the exigencies of their worldly position will not suffer them to give up all things for His sake. In chastity, and in obedience, they must endeavour to emulate the example which He puts before them; for, in these virtues He shrank not back when He had to encounter the grim terror of death, in order to comply with what they required of Him. All men, as we have seen, are, by some very stirring motives, called to this imitation of their Lord. The Eternal Father bids us apply ourselves to this glorious task; Jesus most lovingly invites us to walk in His footsteps and to listen to the lessons which He imparts. No master can be wiser, or holier, or gentler than He is. A little earnest thought will put Him before our mind's eye; our contemplation of Him will fill us with love, with esteem, and with that lively faith which will beget in us energy, spiritual life, and vigour, to enable us to carry into effect the lessons of the great Master, and to fashion our hearts upon the Divine Model which, in His own person, He has put before us. 'Come, therefore, my brethren, let us go forward together; Jesus will be with us. For the sake of Jesus we took up this Cross; for the sake of Jesus let us persevere in the Cross. He will be our helper, Who is our captain and forerunner. Behold our King goes before us, and He will fight for us! Let us follow Him like men; let no one fear the terrors of the fight; let us be ready to die valiantly in battle; and let us not stain our glory by fleeing from the Cross.'[1]

[1] Imitation of Christ, Book III. c. lvi.

# CHAPTER XXV.

## *MORTIFICATION.*

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### SECTION I.

#### NECESSITY FOR MORTIFICATION.

EVEN if we had not received any direct revelation from God concerning our primal state, unaided natural reason would enable us to discover that Almighty God did not create and place man in the world in the condition in which man is at present. For, every work bears upon it an impress of the character and genius of the workman who made it. If it is a piece of mechanism, it manifests the ingenuity of the contriver; if it is some creation of the sculptor's or the painter's hand, it enables us to judge of his artistic skill; if it is a literary composition, it furnishes us with a measure by which to gauge the depth of the writer's mental power. Therefore, when we examine into the nature of man, we ought to be able to see in him that perfection which should be stamped upon the work of Him Who is perfection itself. But what do we discover? A noble work, indeed, yet sadly marred by some unskilful hand, which has broken and disfigured, without completely destroying the masterly production of the great Artist. His body is a marvel of symmetry and of beauty, but it tends to dissolution, for it is made up of elements which have in them the germs of decay and death. His intelligence is bright, clear, and quick, but it is limited in power, and darkened by error. His will is free, but it is feeble and irresolute. His aspirations are naturally high and noble,

but they are dishonoured by practices as vile as they are incongruous in one who, by God, was created only a little less than the Angels. Man, therefore, such as we see him at present, is a very different being from that magnificent creation which sprang into existence when the Almighty, taking into His hands the slime of the earth, formed out of it a thing of beauty and breathed into it the breath of life, and man stood before his Creator a living soul. All his bodily powers were then subject to his soul. All his faculties were in harmony. They were guided by his reason; there was no concupiscence, and there was no strife of discordant passions.

Whence, then, spring the confusion and the disorder which we find in him? Are they of God? Certainly not. They are of man's own creation. They sprang into existence because of his disobedience to the command of God; for, by that act, he introduced into his being an element of discord and disorder, an element which like a withering blight, fastened upon the noble work of God, and made of it the wreck which we see at present. God, in His infinite mercy, did not suffer him to be utterly ruined. He provided a remedy for this apparently irremediable evil. Nevertheless, though that remedy saved man from eternal death, it did not prevent his nature from being grievously impaired; and, therefore, he is like one whose health has been shattered by a malignant fever; his strength is greatly diminished, and there is left in his blood a dangerous infirmity from which he is never completely free. Against this infirmity he has to contend throughout his whole life, by applying to it a remedy which, though bitter and distasteful, is nevertheless the one which God has appointed to save him from utter ruin. This remedy is a renunciation of all those things for which his vitiated nature craves; a self-denial which withholds from his depraved tastes what would but augment his disorder. Like prayer, divine grace, docility to the Holy Spirit, and imitation of the great Model, it is an implement of perfection of which all must make use if they

desire to enter the kingdom of heaven. But, though all are obliged to deny themselves, yet not all are called upon to do so to the same extent. Some make this renunciation in spirit only; others, in reality as well as in spirit; but all must make it in the one or in the other of these ways. If they do not, the gate of heaven will be barred against them. In one of these two ways Almighty God says to all: 'Go forth out of thy country, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee.'[1] Those who are not called to Religious Life, comply with this command by withdrawing their affections from earthly goods, by crucifying their fallen nature, and they are thus enabled to walk in the narrow way. Religious, who are called by God to higher things, abandon in *reality* kindred, country, possessions, and in addition to this, subdue their fallen nature.

The renunciation, then, which is made in reality or in spirit, must be continually kept up; and this, aided by God's grace, enables man to restore order to his nature which has been thrown into confusion and well-nigh ruined by sin. Perhaps we shall best express what is meant by renunciation, if we say that 'it is a spontaneous and free separation of the soul from a carnal life, and a liberation of its powers internal as well as external, from unlawful deeds.'

In the Sacred Scriptures it is called self-denial, self-hatred, the Cross, death, and the like; and it is generally and commonly spoken of by spiritual writers under the term 'mortification.' When we refrain from actions forbidden by the Law of God, it is called *necessary* mortification; when we withhold ourselves from even that which we might lawfully enjoy, it is called *free;* if we choose some privations and inconveniences for ourselves, it is considered to be *active* mortification; if we accept those which befall us by no wish of our own, it is termed *passive.* When these various acts of mortification affect the powers of the

[1] Gen. xii. 1.

soul, it is called *internal* mortification; and when they touch the senses of the body, *external*.

But, from whatever point of view it is looked at, and in whatever way it is applied, mortification is not a pleasant thing to contemplate or to feel. Human nature, which is labouring under a moral malady as debilitating as is any that saps the strength of our bodily frame, always regards it as a nauseous medicine, and shrinks from it as we do from the physician's remedies or from the surgeon's knife. The only way, therefore, in which we can venture to recommend it, is to point out its necessity and its utility, and thus to embolden men to accept and to use it, just as we persuade sick children to swallow their medicine, by telling them that they will not be rid of their illness unless they take the bitter draught, and by proving to them its wonderful efficacy, and the marvellous cures which it is able to effect.

In the first place, then, let us consider the necessity for mortification; and while so doing let us allow our sound practical common-sense to have fair play, that it may dispassionately view this subject of mortification; then we shall, without much difficulty, admit its necessity, and accept it as we do other disagreeable things which, though distasteful, are nevertheless, productive of great good. For, reason accepts immediately as a self-evident truth, the necessity for holding what is precious in higher esteem than what is of little value; for submitting what is inferior to what is superior. It accepts this truth not in theory only, but in practice also and invariably carries it into effect, unless, indeed, passion steps in to pervert the judgment. See, for example, with what unerring skill men apply this principle when their interests, either as individuals or as a community, are at stake! If they build a magnificent vessel and fit it out with all the most recent appliances for ensuring safety and comfort, and load it with a precious freight which will bring in large and profitable returns, they do not at haphazard select to command her, any man who happens to have sailed the seas; they carefully choose out the most skilful captain that they

can find. To him they intrust their vessel, and to his orders subject the crew who are to work her. He commands, rules, and directs them; and they submit to him on the same principle that guided the owners in his appointment: he is superior in point of education and of seamanship; they are inferior in these respects, and they must, therefore, give him place and yield him obsequious obedience.

So it is also with the nation when its well-being is imperilled, and it must needs draw the sword in self-defence. It sends forth its armies into the field, and at their head places one who is superior in point of military skill to lead and direct them. The interest, the honour, and the safety of the State make men see the necessity for acting on the principle that 'the inferior should submit to, and that he should be led by the superior.' If any other is suffered to guide their choice, and a man is intrusted with command because he is nobly born, or is wealthy, or is the Sovereign's favourite, the disasters which befall their arms and the dishonour which disgraces the nation, speedily rectify the error of their judgment, and compel them to act as right reason dictates, without either regard to feeling or respect to persons.

Now, there is no one that will not admit that the soul of man is more precious than his body, and that it is in every way superior to the body. If he admits this, he must admit that the body should be subject to the soul, and that the soul should command, rule, and direct the body. For, it is as unreasonable that the material and perishable body should rule the spiritual and immortal soul, as that the rough, undisciplined, ignorant seamen should command the captain and undertake to sail the vessel, or that some mutinous and unskilful soldier should assume the command of our armies and lead them forth to battle. In both cases such an inversion of right order and of right reason would be equally disastrous. For, as the vessel would be doomed to destruction, and the army to ruinous defeat, so also to eternal dam-

nation would be doomed the soul which should suffer itself to be ruled by the brute instincts of the body.

Reason, therefore, perceives that it is just, equitable, and in accordance with order, that the soul should rule the body, or, in other words, reason admits the necessity for mortification; for, the ruling of the body by the soul means nothing else than that the soul maintains its due position, by denying and resisting the irrational and unlawful desires of the flesh. Like the commander of a vessel, the soul is launched upon the storm-swept ocean of life in the frail barque of the body. The body's faculties, may be likened to the crew which must sail with the soul and help it to reach the haven of safety. In order, then, to accomplish this, either the soul must be their master, or they will become the soul's master, and sink themselves and it in bottomless perdition. Hence, it must rule their actions. When they wish to be idle and to take their ease, it must rouse them up and make them act in accordance with what the Law of God dictates. If they ask for what would endanger the vessel's safety, it must sternly refuse their request. It must not treat them so daintily as that they will grow insolent and rebel, but, it must always remember that they are inclined to plot against authority and to shake off the rule which authority imposes; it must act with them as men act with a sullen, vicious, untractable slave; it must treat them hardly, chastise every irregularity with rigour, and compel them to do aright, by enforcing a minute compliance with every requirement of duty.

In one word, the soul must subdue the body with its senses and powers, or it will itself be subdued and reduced to the vilest slavery. This fact is so self-evident, it was so thoroughly well understood by many of the great philosophers of antiquity, that some of them led lives of such rigorous austerity, as would have won the admiration of the anchorets of the Thebaid. They were urged to do this by the fear of losing their dignity as rational beings, and of falling to the level of the horse and the mule which have no understanding. Chief among those who

struggled against this degradation was the cynic Diogenes who, seeing how fast men were glued to the earth by the pursuit of wealth; how blinded by passion and enervated by pleasure; how burnt up with envy and jealousy; how maddened by anger, flung away his earthly possessions, and strove by every means in his power to preserve in his own person the dignity of human nature. On one occasion he is reported to have gone at midday, lamp in hand, through the streets of Athens, searching with grim humour amid its crowded thoroughfares for a *man*. The jeering crowd of idlers at his heels were incapable, just then, of grasping the truth of the deep lesson which he was teaching them; so they exercised their wit in gibe and jest upon this new eccentricity of the cynic, and merrily pursued him in his fruitless search. He found no man upon the flags of the great Agora, though crowds of noisy sophists and squabbling politicians were there, defining, discussing, and spinning out airy theories of philosophy and of government. Vanity, pride, and ambition filled their souls with a very tempest of unrest, blinded their eyes to obvious truths, and poisoned their hearts with the venom of impotent rage against those who either opposed their views, or barred their way to place and power. There was no man to be found in the porticoes of the baths, amid the votaries of pleasure. Gross licentiousness had corrupted their blood, and burnt out health and youth from their wretched bodies, which were hastening prematurely to the grave. Not even upon the long quays of the busy Piræus, where keen traders congregated to watch the arrival or the departure of their richly freighted vessels, could the cynic discover his *man*. Avarice, like a vulture gnawed at their hearts; the passion of greed gleamed out fierce from their eager eyes; there was no truth, no honesty in them; their soul was the slave of their passions. He found no man, for the man whom he sought was one who thwarted, denied, and kept in awe and bondage those very passions to which all around him were enslaved. In that beautiful city few,

indeed, were the men that could say with a great thinker: 'I am too great to be the slave of my body,' and that to prevent themselves from becoming slaves, had resolved to treat it harshly and to bring it into obedience to the soul.

But though the argument with which natural reason urges upon us the necessity for mortification is a very strong one, it must yield the palm for cogency to the vast weight of authority which presses it upon us from the inspired pages of Holy Writ. Those living words, which speak to us with the voice of God, call upon us in the thrilling tones of exhortation, in the severe simplicity of precept, in the awe-inspiring cry of warning and of menace, to curb our fallen nature and to bring it into subjection to the spirit. Almost immediatly after the fall, mortification is pointed out to man by his offended Maker as the punishment of sin, as its most effectual remedy: 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread.'[1] By that painful toil, generation after generation of men offered some satisfaction to God for their transgressions, and by its healthful bitterness they were enabled to counteract and to expel the corruption of their hearts.

After the lapse of ages, when Almighty God began to instruct His chosen people and to impose upon them a written Law, the necessity for curbing the animal nature within them, and for forbidding it to gratify its desires, is shadowed forth by that minute legislation in which God pointed out those meats which they were allowed to eat, and those which they were forbidden to touch. As if to let us all know how severely He will punish those who do not abide within the limits prescribed by right reason and by written Law, He chastised with terrible severity those who grew weary of the manna which He had sent them, and longed with childish waywardness for grosser and more succulent fare. But the most striking ceremonial by means of which He impressed upon their minds the remembrance of their deliverance from bondage, and

[1] Gen. iii. 19.

taught them the necessity for living in the world as pilgrims and as strangers, was the annual solemnity of the Passover. On that festival, they were ordered to stand while eating the Paschal lamb; to consume it in haste; to have their loins girt and staves in their hands; and to take no other kind of food with it except unleavened bread and bitter lettuces. In all these circumstances, He vividly paints before their eyes the necessity for mortification. They were leaving a land of bondage; they had to travel to a distant country. These facts taught them not to fasten their affections upon earthly possessions, or to dwell here below as if it was to be their lasting home. They stood at their meal, to indicate that they were not to rest in the natural pleasures of this life, as if these were the end of their existence. Their loins were girt, to teach them that they must curb the unruly lusts of the flesh; their bread was unleavened, to show them that their hearts must be pure; their lettuces were bitter, to tell them that all the pleasures of life must be tempered with the healthful severity of self-repression. Thus, in numberless passages scattered profusely throughout the pages of the Old Testament, we find the necessity for mortification urged upon us with an amount of repetition which cannot fail to impress upon us how important an implement it must be, to help us to secure the great end for which God has sent us into the world. 'Rend your hearts,' exclaims the Prophet Joel, 'and turn to the Lord your God, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. Sanctify a fast, call an assembly. Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the ministers of the Lord, shall weep, and shall say: Spare, O Lord! spare thy people!' [1] Isaias speaks of God as calling His people to weeping, to mourning, to girding with sackcloth; [2] and Ecclesiasticus sums up in one startling proposition all that can be said to urge men to subdue their passions: 'If we do not penance, we shall fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men:' [3] that is to

[1] Joel ii. 12, 15, 17. [2] Isai. xxii. 12. [3] Ecclus. ii. 22.

say, we shall fall into the power of One Who is able to punish us with an arm of almighty strength, and infinitely to avenge the degraded majesty of human nature, which He created and destined for glory and for honour that shall never fade.

Such was the teaching of all the great Seers and Prophets, whom, under the Old Dispensation, God sent to instruct His people and to guide them in the paths of justice. That doctrine was in no wise changed when the only-begotten Son of God in human flesh, came into the world and walked about through the towns and the villages of Judea preaching salvation and the remission of sins. He, the great Master, Who came to lift a fallen race out of the mire of a carnal life and make it live unto God according to the spirit, unceasingly taught them the necessity for mortification. It was the medicine that He gave them to expel the foul disorders of their sinful and corrupt lives. He told those who, in vast crowds, flocked to Him, that unless they hated their lives in this world by warring against their flesh and its concupiscences as if these were their deadliest enemies, they could not win for themselves that future life of never ending joy which He promised to them. He did not conceal from them that it could not be merited without doing violence to their natural inclinations; only those who were willing to suffer this wrench would bear away that inestimable prize. Therefore, His constant theme was of renunciation; to give up self and self-seeking, to turn out of the broad, smooth, and easy way of the carnal world which leads men straight, and swiftly, and pleasantly into hell; to take up their Cross and to walk courageously in the steep and narrow way which conducts to eternal life, in company with the chosen few who are willing to suffer with their Master. He bade them watch over the motions of their hearts; He told them to stifle their anger and to be like Himself, meek and humble of heart; to lead a laborious life, and to bow down their heads to

the buffeting, the reproach, and the contumely of the world, which would hate them, because they were not of it; because they despised its animal spirit, scorned its swinish pleasures, and regarded as so much worthless dross its wealth, its dignities, its honours and all those paltry, gilded toys of which it makes so great account. The alternative which He placed before them and us is as terrible as that which the Wise Man put before the men of his day: they must either take up and pursue this penitential and mortified life or they will perish eternally: 'Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish.'

The Apostles, taught in the school of Christ, were full of His spirit. Their preaching was of penance, and the first words that came to the lips of St. Peter, when the crowds stirred by his burning eloquence on the day of Pentecost, said to him: 'What shall we do?' were: 'Do penance, for the remisson of your sins.'[1] In almost the same words he exhorted the people who thronged around him at the Beautiful Gate, in a stupor of admiration at the miracle which he had wrought on the person of the cripple: 'Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.'[2] That which the Apostles preached to others they themselves practised. St. Paul, in his address to the Elders at Ephesus, gives us an insight into the mortified lives which he and his brother Apostles had led, labouring with their hands, in order not to be a burthen to their converts; serving God amid the sorrows and the trials which befell them from the malignity of their enemies; counting nothing a hardship, provided that the Church was advanced and that souls were saved; coveting not silver, or gold, or apparel, but, like their great Master, deeming it a more blessed thing to give than to receive.[3]

At Cæsarea, when defending himself before King Agrippa, he told him in a few words what his teaching had been among those to whom he had delivered the message which he was commissioned by God to give: 'I preached,' he says,

[1] Acts ii. 38. [2] Acts iii. 19. [3] Acts xx. 35.

'that they should do penance and turn to God, doing works worthy of penance.'[1] As a matter of fact, the aim of this great lover and imitator of Jesus Christ was to persuade men to live mortified lives. Hence, his constant exhortations to put off the old man; to make their bodies a sacrifice unto God; to walk according to the spirit; to resist evil desires, and never to suffer sin to reign in their members. In order to stir up their torpid wills to do these works, so galling, so mortifying to human nature, he told them, in one pithy sentence, the result of a life of self-indulgence, and the result of a life of Christian mortification; 'If you live according to the flesh, you shall die, but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.'[2] If we search into the lives of the confessors, the virgins, the martyrs, and the great Doctors of the Church, we shall find them upon this point, both in theory and in practice, quite in harmony with Jesus Christ and with His Apostles. Their words, and still more their lives, proclaim, in a language intelligible to the meanest capacity, the necessity for mortification for all who wish to lead a holy life and to gain the everlasting reward of heaven. Their unanimous verdict is: 'If you do not lead a mortified life, you will all perish miserably.'

## SECTION II.

### UTILITY OF MORTIFICATION.

ALL this proves beyond doubt the necessity for mortification; and, therefore, unpleasant as mortification is, it ought to be accepted by us as readily as we accept any other of those vexatious annoyances which we endure willingly enough in order to escape evils of greater magnitude. But there is another aspect under which it commends itself to our attention, and that is its

[1] Acts xxvi. 20. [2] Rom. viii. 13.

utility to make us truly Christ-like in our character, to sanctify us by the continual influx of the grace of God, and firmly to root us in peace and in solid virtue. For, by grace we are made like to Our divine Lord, and nothing so bends the will of God to open wide His treasury of supernatural favours as does that perfect sacrifice which is inseparable from self-renunciation. When we mortify self, we give to God a something which is our own. We do not offer to Him what is external to ourselves, what we may procure from another, but we make to Him the oblation of our hearts and of our bodies, an oblation which is of all other sacrifices the most difficult to offer. To give of our worldly substance, of our silver and of our gold, is a matter of little difficulty; but to give up our inclinations, to thwart our wills, to curb our anger, to repress our pride, to forgive injuries, not to take revenge—these are acts by which we give up our flesh and blood, as well as the nobler faculties of our soul. It is, in one word, the sacrifice of the whole man to God; and no one can, in its entirety, practise Christian mortification, without presenting to his Maker a holocaust that surpasses all other purely human sacrifices.

Hence, Almighty God is moved to be liberal and generous to those who are so liberal and generous to Him. Consequently, in the Sacred Scriptures, He has promised to give abundantly and of His choicest gifts to those who thus win the victory over His, as well as over their own enemies: 'To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of My God. To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna. He that shall overcome shall be clothed in white garments; I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and I will give him to sit with Me in My throne.'[1] By such expressions as these, the Spirit of God points to that continual influx of graces, inundating the soul of him whom the King of heaven delights to honour. Now, whom does He delight to honour? Only those who are willing to follow Him in

[1] Apoc. ii. 7-17, and iii. 5, 12, 21.

self-denial. 'To him that *overcometh*' the spirit of the world, the rebellion of the flesh, and the wiles of the devil, and that, shaking off all remissness and all sluggishness in the service of God, fearlessly presses onward in the path of penance, to him God will give to eat of the tree of life, the fruit of which will endow him with new spiritual life, and strength, and vigour. He will bestow upon him that heavenly manna of which the taste is savoury only to those whose senses are not cloyed by the gross and rank delights of the world. By this manna is understood purity of heart, of mind, and of body, and those heavenly sweetnesses and delights which are born of contemplation, and which are the rewards conferred by God upon those brave soldiers who fight the good fight in His cause, and overcome in the might of His name.

It is of this hidden manna that the Psalmist speaks, when he says: 'My soul shall exult in the Lord, and shall be delighted in His salvation. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like to Thee?'[1] He promises similar spiritual joys to those who, spurning the ways of sinners, choose rather to walk in the paths of justice: 'They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them to drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure.'[2] So great is the joy bestowed by God on those who deny themselves that, in another place, he goes on to say that it fills even their bodily senses with exquisite pleasure: 'My heart and my flesh have exulted in the living God.'[3]

It was on account of the heavenly delights with which Our Lord recompensed St. Paul for his laborious service and for all that he suffered in the cause of God, that the Apostle was able to say: 'We glory in our tribulations.'[4] He was content to stand against the world in arms, provided only that God was with him;[5] and well he might, for, like all those who mortify their vices and concupiscences, he had had the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit poured into

[1] Ps. xxxiv. 9. [2] Ps. xxxv. 10. [3] Ps. lxxxiii. 3.
[4] Rom. v. 3. [5] Rom. viii. 31.

his heart. He was filled with the joy of His holy presence; he was sustained by His almighty power; he had the honour and the glory of being adopted into the number of the sons of God; he was inebriated with the delights of charity, enlightened with divine science, strengthened with the unction of grace, and fired with that ardent love which Christ came on earth to enkindle.

These are some of the graces which flow like a running stream into the hearts of those who deny themselves; for, it is but rational to expect this outpouring from the treasury of God, because mortification breaks down the opposing barrier which holds back and prevents the waters of grace from inundating our souls. Therefore, just as water will flow copiously through a pipe from which a stopping has been withdrawn, so also will divine grace pour its invigorating streams into that soul from which the clogging material of sin has been purged away. This purgation, as we have said, is effected by mortification, which tames the flesh just as punishment, or the privation of food, subdues the savage temper of the brute creation. When, therefore, the passions have been brought under control, the elements of strife and of discord are removed. Then the mind is free to attend to the suggestions of the Holy Spirit; the heart is at liberty to love whatever He puts before it; the will to adhere to what is good. Thus the practice of mortification brings into the heart the constant flow of God's divine grace. God Himself is there present as in a tabernacle, and wherever He is, there reigns a peace which surpasses all understanding.

This fact is but one proof the more to imprint deeply on our minds the great utility of mortification; for, by means of it is secured that heart-rest which men seek after with passionate earnestness in the gratification of their unlawful desires. At first, this statement sounds very like a paradox; for, men are inclined to think that nothing will satiate the hunger of the heart but the food for which it craves. A little reflection, however, will show that it is only

by a rigorous abstinence from such meat that the soul is able to taste the sweetness of the peace for which it longs. For, consider whence arise the internal war and ceaseless contention which are the death of peace: 'Are they not,' asks St. James,[1] 'from your concupiscences,' that is to say, from your unmortified desires, 'which war in your members?' Men covet, and they are unable to obtain. They search after objects which cannot satisfy them. They contend with one another for worthless trifles. They are fired with anger when they do not compass their ends; they rage, and they are consumed with desires of vengeance; their eyes drink in objects which add fuel to the fire burning within; their ears are like the draught-holes of a furnace, sucking in the air which fans into a fiercer heat the fire consuming them; their bodies are very centres of nervous irritation. How can they shut off these elements of war and of commotion, unless they close the entrances by which these elements find an ingress into the soul? That is to say, they must mortify themselves.

To do this is the one great and infallible remedy for the monstrous evil which is the death of peace; for, when mortification is applied both to the sensitive organs of the body and to the spiritual faculties of the soul, it straightway brings a hush among the noisy and ferocious combatants. It produces upon them an effect similar to that which water produces upon fire; if water is applied in sufficient quantity, it quite extinguishes the flames. Then the will ceases to desire what is contrary to right reason and to the Law of God; the appetite makes no resistance to the reason; the imagination is cleared of disquieting images; the senses are confined within due bounds; the heart does not rebel—in one word, the body becomes subject to the spirit, the spirit is made subject to God; and when this due subordination of the inferior to the superior is effected, there reigns in the soul as profound a calm as that which fell upon the tempestuous waters of the Galilean Sea,

[1] St. James iv. 1.

when He Who rides upon the whirlwind and guides the spirit of the storm, stretched forth His almighty hand over the surging waves, and said to the angry sea: 'Be thou still.'

Besides procuring peace for the soul and unlocking for it the treasure-house of God's grace, mortification is useful in another very important particular; that is, in its power to make our virtue as solid as a mass of carefully-constructed masonry, resting upon an immovable rock. In order to see its utility in this respect, consider for a moment the characteristics of human virtue, before the discipline of sound and rational mortification has strung up its muscles, and developed their force, and given to them that toughness, that elasticity, and that power of endurance which enable a man to fight the good fight and to finish his course perseveringly to the end. It is a puny, meagre, shrivelled-up, decrepit sort of thing, with a sickly kind of vitality in it, as if its spark of life had been but half enkindled. Look at the little which it enables man to do, and at the wretchedly imperfect way in which he does it. 'He is full of the motions of lust, he is unguarded in his outward senses, and entangled with many vain imaginings. Inclined to things without, negligent of those within, disposed to relaxation and to bodily comforts, sluggish to austerity and to fervour, curious to hear news, remiss in embracing things humble and abject. Covetous to possess, sparing to give, tenacious to retain. Thoughtless in speech, indecorous in habits, over-eager in action. Greedy at meals, deaf to the word of God, quick to rest, slow to labour. In prayer to God, hasty to make an end; wandering in attention, negligent in recitation, lukewarm and dry in Holy Communion, quickly distracted, and seldom fully recollected. With regard to others, apt to take offence, easily moved to anger, prone to judge severely, and to rebuke harshly. With respect to the ordinary occurrences of life, glad in prosperity, weak in adversity. In one word, human virtue proposes very much, and does very little.' [1]

[1] Imitation of Christ, Book IV. c. vii.

The reason of all this is not because men altogether reject mortification; for, if they did, they would not have even the sickly, nerveless sort of virtue which they possess; but because they do not apply it with that liberality and that thoroughness which spring from a full grasp of all that the idea contains. They run away, as is the fashion among most men, with only half the idea; some taking the one portion, and some the other. The right notion of mortification is that it is a remedy which has to affect the *whole* man. Its influence must be felt in his spiritual, as well as in his physical nature. Now, very many look upon bodily mortification as a sort of gross, materialistic, fanatical superstition which may have been pardonable in what are supposed to have been 'the dark ages,' but which should find no place in the religion of this enlightened age. Others, taking just the opposite view, attach too great importance to those austerities which curb the animal instincts of the body, but contemn as effeminate and worthless the repressive measures employed to bring into due subjection the faculties of the soul.

It is in consequence of these one-sided views, or half-views that, in the Religious Life, we oftentimes meet with anomalies that startle and scandalise us. We come in contact with men who are supposed to be models of every virtue. Their reputation for sanctity has spread far and wide; and men speak of them as of something which ought to be talked of only with bated breath. But what is the astonishment of plain, common-sense, ordinary Christians, when they find that these reputed saints speak uncharitably; that they criticise their Superiors and tear them to pieces; that they are snappish, discontented, disobedient, self-willed, and much more besides which a chance acquaintance does not unveil! Yet, withal, they are rigorous in point of bodily mortification; they fast often; they live in poverty; they macerate their flesh, and make use of penitential implements, which cause the simple to regard them as models of consummate sanctity.

Others, again, go to just the opposite extreme, and aim

at internal mortification, without caring externally to deny themselves in anything, except in things in which it would be a gross transgression of the Divine Law to indulge. They treat themselves delicately ; they are clad luxuriously ; they fare sumptuously, and so wrap themselves round with all the comforts and the elegancies of polished, worldly society, that naught unpleasant is ever suffered to touch them. As might be expected, men of this stamp fail miserably in many respects of vital importance, and discover to their cost that the spirit of the Gospel does not, and that it cannot thrive in such an atmosphere, and in such a soil.

What wonder is it that these well-intentioned persons do not succeed in expelling from their hearts the great evil draining away their vital strength, since they apply only half the remedy prescribed for its ejection! The whole man is sick, both inside and out; and they apply the remedy, some to the outside, neglecting the very centre of the disorder ; others to the inside, caring nothing for the gaping wounds and sores which appear so hideous to the eyes of all but themselves. Therefore, if man's virtue is to be a solid virtue, if it is to be wholly developed and made perfect in every particular, both kinds of mortification must be applied—that which chastens the powers of his soul, and that which holds under control the animal instincts of his body. The one lends its aid to, and it is necessary for the other. If we neglect the one, we neutralise the effect of the other. Vain is it to build up the out-works and to dig out the ditches of a fortress, if the garrison is mutinous within ; futile are the efforts of even a brave and faithful garrison, if the defences are left unguarded, to be clutched by the enemy. So also is it with those who practise external mortification, but neglect that which is internal. Their virtue will never be of that tough, enduring kind which is victorious in every fight. But let them grasp the whole idea of mortification, and look upon it as necessary for their body as well as for their soul, and straightway the entire man will be braced up and made firm and solid. The garrison within will be kept under strict discipline, and

held well in hand; the defences through which the enemy must enter will be strictly watched and defended; and so the spiritual man will be in peace. He is then a Christ-like man, solidly virtuous, and, for that very reason, undisturbed by the turmoil and the conflict which ever keep the heart of a half-Christian in an uproar. He is rich in the graces of Almighty God, Who is liberal in His favours to those who are loyal to Him. Thus we can see how useful, and withal how necessary, is this salutary mortification for all who wish to be the followers of Christ; because, without its repressive influence, man is unable to rule himself and to preserve his dignity as a rational creature and as a child of God.

Therefore, if we wish to be masters of ourselves and kings in our own hearts, we must regard ourselves as set over our wounded and weakened nature, to bring it back by careful tending, to that happy state in which God created it, when all its bodily powers were subject to the spirit, and the spirit was subject to God Himself. At present it is like one who has been sorely stricken in battle and who lies tossing with fever heat upon an uneasy couch. It must not be suffered to have whatever it may please to crave for; it must be forced to abstain from all that either would augment the consuming heat wasting away its strength, or would inflame the wounds which are the chief cause of its pitiable condition. This abstinence, this mortification or killing of its desires, may seem cruel, but it is a cruelty that is kind. The wounds must be probed and cleansed, even though the operation causes most acute suffering. Remedies must be taken and applied, even though the poor patient either rejects, or endeavours to reject them; their necessity and their utility must plead for them, and make palatable what is so unpleasant to the flesh. This treatment must not be employed for a time only; it must be continual. The disorder is always there, always manifesting itself in new symptoms and breaking out in fresh places; therefore, the remedy must be applied continually. If this will not altogether expel the disorder (and that ex-

pulsion can never be completely effected till the spark of life itself is extinguished), it will at least procure a state of health that will make life bearable and worth living. It will raise man up to be master of himself. It will not suffer him to be, what his passions would make him, a helpless log tossed hither and thither by their tempestuous waves. It will gradually smooth away the scars of his hideous wounds and restore to him that image of God which sin had well nigh obliterated In one word, it will make him a *man*; his body, the inferior part of him, subject to his soul, and that soul the humble servant of the Lord, Who made him to His own image and likeness.

# CHAPTER XXVI.

## *INTERNAL MORTIFICATION.*

## SECTION I.

### WHY IT SHOULD BE APPLIED TO THE SOUL.

WHAT has been said in the preceding chapter concerning mortification in general, will serve to show clearly that it is preventive and remedial in its character: preventive inasmuch as it wards off all evil influences, and remedial inasmuch as it helps to heal the wounds inflicted on the soul by the gratification of passion. Thus, both its utility and its necessity have been established upon a sure and solid basis. The next step, therefore, to be taken in this science of salvation is to examine the excellence of mortification when applied to the faculties of the soul as well as to the sensitive organs of the body. The arguments which we will use to show why these internal faculties must be subjected to this ordeal, and the method which we will suggest for effectively submitting them to it, will furnish matter amply sufficient for the present chapter. The question of bodily mortification must, therefore, stand over till it can be treated of by itself.

In the first place, then, let us ask ourselves why mortification should be applied to the faculties of the soul; and in the next place, let us learn how the application of it should be made.

Before considering either of these questions, it will materially assist the reader to accept the answers which shall be given if we first explain, in as popular a way as

may be, the manner in which the soul's faculties are exercised in the process of thought. For this purpose, let us take from the Sacred Scriptures an incident in which a man's memory, understanding, and will are brought into play by some agency external to himself, for the express purpose of moving him to do something which, but for that agency, he would, perhaps, never have thought of doing. An excellent case in point is to be found in that chapter of the book of Kings[1] in which we are told that the Prophet Nathan was sent to David to open his eyes to the enormity of his sin. That illustrious prince had gratified the lust of his heart, and had brought disgrace upon the house of a frank and openhearted soldier. To hide his crime, he had cunningly made away with his unsuspecting victim, by exposing him in the foremost ranks of the battle to the sword of the enemy.

Then he was at rest. His passion was satisfied, and his joy in the possession of Bethsabee, the wife of Urias, seems to have blinded him and to have dulled the edge of his conscience, for, he was living, to all appearances, in a state of utter forgetfulness of the crime which he had committed.

At this juncture the word of the Lord came to Nathan, and bade him go into the presence of the king, and bring home to him the enormity of his guilt. Never was mission more delicate intrusted to mortal man. He had to tell the king of the heinous crime of which he had been guilty, he had to induce him to confess and to be sorry for it. To have entered into his presence and to have said in a few blunt words: 'Thou art an adulterer and murderer,' would, perhaps, have angered the monarch, and made him harden his heart against the gracious mercy of God. Therefore, inspired by wisdom from on high, he adopted quite another course. He presented himself before the king with a troubled air and a sorrowful countenance, as if some deep grief had taken possession of his heart. This naturally attracted the notice of the king, and led him to ask the

[1] 2 Kings xii. 1.

cause, and then the Prophet was able to speak to him in such a way as to recall the past, make him perceive the enormity of his guilt, and then turn from it with all the loathing of his magnanimous and loving heart. This stratagem had the desired effect. The king put the question which the Prophet desired him to ask, and then, with a sorrowful voice and an agitated mien, Nathan replied: 'There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many sheep and oxen; but the poor man had nothing at all but one little ewe lamb, which he had brought up and nourished, and which had grown up in his house together with his children, eating of his bread and drinking of his cup, and sleeping in his bosom; and it was unto him as a daughter. And when a certain stranger was come to the rich man, he spared to take of his own sheep and oxen, to make a feast for that stranger who was come to him, but took the poor man's ewe and dressed it for the man that was come to him.'

A more cleverly contrived story, or one better calculated to rouse up and to enlist all the sympathy of the noble-hearted king, could not possibly have been devised. The sordid meanness of this wealthy and powerful man, the injustice of his tyrannical act, and the cruelty with which he snatched the pet lamb from the midst of the poor man's weeping family, revolted every sentiment of his generous nature. A flash of indignant anger shot from his eyes, and interrupting the Prophet, he cried out: 'As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this is a child of death! He shall restore the ewe four-fold, because he did this thing and had no pity.' Then Nathan, looking him full in the face, slowly and solemnly uttered the words: '*Thou* art the man.'

'He had placed before his imagination such a picture of gross injustice as would have fired the meekest soul with indignation. It extorted from David the expression of his utter abhorrence. His will turned away from it with a loathing which winged words of scorn and anger could not adequately express. Yet he saw not that all this was a

picture of himself, till the words 'Thou art the man' tore away the veil from his eyes, and let, as it were, a full flood of noonday light pour its radiance upon his darkened soul. These words recalled to his mind the sin which he had apparently forgotten. His imagination pictured before his memory the details of every incident which had taken place in the commission of it; the memory put them all before his intelligence, and that noble faculty judged of their wickedness, their selfishness, their revolting cruelty, and condemned the foul deed with all the vehemence with which he had exclaimed against the fictitious offender whose evil deed the Prophet had so cleverly put before him. Then his will detested the enormity of which he had been guilty; and crushed beneath an accumulated load of shame and sorrow, he fell upon his knees and said, 'I have sinned against the Lord.'

From this we shall be able to form a sufficiently clear idea of the process involved in the action of thought. It shows us how the memory makes use of the imagination to aid it in recalling the ideas of things which the intelligence has heretofore perceived; how the intelligence apprehends these ideas, and out of them forms propositions which are judgments about those ideas; finally, how, by means of reason, it draws conclusions, and then presents these conclusions to the will, which either accepts them or rejects them. Thus the human soul is moved to act, and because its action is so closely connected with and because it is so dependent upon the united efforts of the memory, the intelligence, and the will, it will be evident, we think, to the meanest intelligence, why it is so useful and so necessary to apply to these internal faculties the preventive and the remedial influence of Christian mortification. Now, although it may seem superfluous to add anything to the reasons already alleged in the preceding chapter to prove this, nevertheless we think that it will not be out of place here to add somewhat to them, in order to supply the will with an additional motive for courageously applying a remedy which, though necessary and useful, is neverthe-

less so little appreciated and so distasteful to the unregenerate heart of man.

It must be borne in mind, then, that when spiritual writers speak of the *heart* of man which practises virtue, loves God, resists the devil, and the like, they do not mean us to take it for that heart of flesh which is the well-spring of our natural life. For them the term has a higher and nobler signification. It represents the union of those intellectual faculties by which we perceive and reason and move ourselves to act; it is, in fact, our heart in the true sense of the word, rather than that material portion of our organism which is the chief seat of vital action. They are speaking, then, in a metaphorical sense when they call this intellectual, spiritual life 'our *heart;*' but by making use of such an expression they wish to intimate to us that, just as our heart of flesh is the centre of our material being, whence the life-stream flows throughout our bodies and preserves us in vigour and in fresh lusty life, so also this union of intellectual faculties or our spiritual heart is, as it were, the centre and the source of that intellectual and spiritual life which is within us, whereby we are men and not merely brute beasts. It is with a wise object, therefore, that the term heart is applied to this nobler portion of our being. It is so designated by holy men, not only to show us that they consider the spiritual life to be our true life, but also by insinuation, to teach us a very important truth. For, by the use of such phraseology they would have us understand that our spiritual faculties, our spiritual heart, is the most precious treasure that we possess. It is, in fact, to our soul what our heart is to our body; and therefore, to say the least of it, it ought to be defended from injury with equal care. See with what provident foresight nature has provided for the well-being of that citadel of life! It has placed it deep within the breast, or, as our language so picturesquely expresses it, in the chest, as in a stone box, warded from injury by a compact rampart of bone and flesh and muscle. Nay, even within that place of safety it is carefully wrapped round in

a tough, membranous substance, like some precious jewel for the safe-keeping of which the owner deems no custody too secure. As if to make assurance doubly sure, the all-wise Creator has implanted in the nature of man an instinct of self-preservation which is, as it were, a shield to be advanced on this side and on that, to ward off what might put its well-being in jeopardy. Now, just in the same proportion in which our soul is superior to our body, ought the care which we bestow upon the safe-keeping of our spiritual heart to be greater than are the pains which we take to shield our material heart from harm. If we are ready to sacrifice property, position, friends, and fame, rather than part with our natural life which wells up from it, with far greater readiness ought we to be willing to suffer the loss of all that is mere perishable dross, rather than forfeit our true life, for the loss of which not all the wealth and power and honour of the world can adequately compensate.

Now, what is that which, setting aside for a moment the grace of God, clothes us in armour of proof capable of resisting the blows of our enemies, and of turning aside their cleverly-directed missiles? Is it not that system of careful vigilance and of self-repression which we know so well under the name *mortification*? If it is endowed with this power, as it undoubtedly is, can there be any folly greater than to cast it from us, because, forsooth, we find it somewhat cumbersome? This is folly, on the part of a Christian, as great as it would be on the part of a soldier to cast away his arms because they are heavy. It is surely better to endure fatigue than to be captured, enslaved, and, perhaps, put to death. Therefore, mortification is to be employed for the purpose of defending our intellectual faculties or our spiritual heart, from the assaults of our numberless foes. It is to this that the Wisest of Men is exhorting us when he says; 'With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it.'[1] For, like the vast crowd of holy men who have imbibed his spirit and drunk of the same fount whence he drew his inspiration,

[1] Prov. iv. 23.

he uses the term '*heart*' in the same sense in which they use it, namely, to signify the spiritual faculties of the soul. These he considers worthy of a more careful defence than is that heart of flesh which we guard with such provident forethought, because it is the fount whence we draw our life. 'With *all* watchfulness,' he says, 'keep thy heart.' According to him, therefore, it has to be defended with all that earnestness and care which we bestow upon what is most precious and is nearest and dearest to us.

Consider, then, what a man will do to save his property, or his children, or his reputation, or his life. He will spare no fatigue, no anxiety, to prevent his possessions from being clutched by robbers, or from being damaged through the carelessness and the indifference of subordinates. He will go through fire and water, and run the risk of death itself, to snatch his little ones from the destruction which threatens them; he will watch with jealous care over his fair fame and suffer to be cast upon it no aspersion which he will not, at once, eagerly strive to wipe off. As for that wretched life which is so easily lost, there are many who would sacrifice their all rather than risk the loss of it; nay, so strong is this instinct that, only the nobler spirits are ready to imperil it, to save even wife, or child, or friend. Yet, neither property nor wife, neither child nor even life itself, dear as each of these things is, can be half so precious as is that soul which, alas! men hold so cheap! If a man loses his property, his children, and his reputation, he still has life; and if he loses his life, he may yet save his soul and he may be for ever happy by gaining the possession of his God; but, if he loses his soul, he loses his all! If he loses all else and saves his soul, all is saved; if he loses his soul and saves all else, all is lost. Therefore, that which is of all other things the most precious, should be defended with the greatest care; with all the care which we bestow upon the preservation of our earthly possessions; with all the care with which we guard the life of children, or of wife, or of friend; with all the care which we employ to keep our breath of life. Hence, it must be guarded on every side,

for, on every side it is open to the attacks of enemies intent upon its destruction. Therefore, we must clothe ourselves in the armour of Christian mortification, in order to be able to ward off the destruction impending over our priceless soul. We must set a watch over it, to scare away the enemies who, on all sides round, are spying out its weak places. In fine, because the intellectual faculties of our soul—the memory, the understanding, and the will—are to us what the heart is unto the body, we must defend them against the attacks of sin with as much earnestness as we defend our life from the knife of the assassin.

## SECTION II.

### HOW MORTIFICATION SHOULD BE APPLIED.

Having seen, then, the reasons why mortification should exercise its preventive and its remedial influence upon the intellectual faculties of the soul, let us now consider how it may be most advantageously applied to each of them. First in order comes the memory, which, as we have already said, is a faculty by which the soul is able to recall the ideas of things of which the intelligence, at some former time, has been cognisant. It will be remembered, also, that in order to recall these ideas, the memory has to seek the aid of the imagination which is able to reproduce the images and the pictures of those things of which the senses have once had a clear perception. Hence, in order to mortify the memory, the imagination must first be brought under control. For, we may liken the imagination to the photographer's sensitive film upon which every object that passes before the lens of the camera imprints itself, and afterwards that object is made to stand out clear before the eye, by a certain process which may be compared to the action of the memory in calling back before the eye of the intelligence the impressions made upon the senses. It is manifest, therefore, that the first step to be taken is, carefully to hin-

der all objects that would make an evil impression upon the senses, from presenting themselves before them, just as the photographer covers up the lens, in order to reserve his plate for the reception of only those impressions which he desires to reproduce. But of this we need not say any more now, as we shall have to speak of it more at large when we treat of bodily mortification.

In the next place a curb must be put upon the memory to prevent it from wandering into regions peopled with images which will serve to fill it with only idle, dangerous, and evil recollections. The past is like a graveyard in which lie buried the thoughts, the desires, and the acts which have sprung from the soul, or in the creation of which it has had some share. They are its offspring, and from time to time it goes about among the tombs and holds communion with its dead. It weeps over them with fond regret; it does what in it lies to give them back the life which they enjoyed in bygone years. These thoughts, and acts, and desires which have once lived, are thus, by the magical power of memory, made to live again. They stand out before the eye of the intelligence as clear as in the days which are gone. They are loved and accepted by the will, and thus, sometimes, they become an occasion of actions which are recorded in the book of doom. Hence it is evident that, with respect to the past, the curb of mortification must be set upon the memory. For, in that past, how many things are there which it is better to leave in their graves to rot, till naught of them remains? If they start like spectres from their tombs, let them, at once, be waved back, and not be suffered to come before that intelligence which their presence might stir up to form judgments and to draw conclusions which would move the will to act, and give birth to deeds from the very shadow of which it ought to turn with horror. In this way the repressive power of mortification will be brought to bear upon the imagination and the memory, with respect to the past.

Its curb is no less necessary to restrain the flight of the imagination and of the memory into the uncertain future;

for, though the memory cannot be said to have any power over the time which is still to come, yet it may, by means of what has gone before and by the aid of the imagination and the fancy, weave out of the past a dreamy picture of future possibilities. In these fantasies the intelligence and the will take delight, and as much mischief may be the outcome of this indulgence as springs from the contemplation of the days which have gone for ever. Hence, the future must be shut off from the imagination when that future suggests matter which is of a perilous nature. Even when it does not do this, it would be wise not to indulge the imagination in such fancies, but to confine it to the present time, and not suffer it to expend its energies upon idle visions of that which may never have any reality. The future should be looked upon as an enclosed garden which we are not allowed to enter. To disport ourselves in it is, therefore, a species of trespassing to which many penalties are annexed. Of these the chief are, loss of valuable time, an unreal notion of things, an unpractical way of looking at and of dealing with them, and a continual disappointment of hopes which turn out just the opposite to that which we anticipated. In consequence of this, there spring up within us a moroseness of character and a carping critical turn of mind, which unfit us to act in concert with our fellow-men. Hence, the imagination should be withheld from straying into the future, which does not belong to us; and thus the power aiding the memory, as well as the memory itself is mortified and kept within due bounds. When this has been effected, the task of preserving our intelligence from error and from an unjust bias, which are the results of incorrect or of false judgments, will be easy indeed.

But in order to be preserved from these evils, to which the intelligence of every man is exposed, even this noble faculty itself must be subjected to the ordeal of mortification. The intelligence, according to Aristotle, exercises a twofold operation upon the images of things presented to it by the senses, or by the imagination and the memory.

First, it divests them of all that is gross and material, and when they are thus spiritualised, it accepts and absorbs all their characteristic marks, even though the things which they represent do not fall within the domain of the senses. It exercises, in various ways, its power of grasping, of analysing, and of knowing them: by simply apprehending the things presented to it, or by affirming, or by denying something about them; or again by forming a chain of reasoning, and drawing a conclusion out of two judgments which it has made. It is with regard to the conclusion thus arrived at, that the intelligence must be made to feel the curb of mortification. For, as this conclusion is the child of the mind, it is loved by every man with the fondness of a doating father for his little one. In his eyes such conclusions are strong and true; they are just and deduced with logical accuracy from premises about which there can be no doubt. Hence, men are filled with so great a love of their own judgments, reasonings, and conclusions, that they cling to them with a tenacity which they show for few things else. The consequence is that they fall into many gross, palpable errors, and persevere in them with an obstinacy which nothing is able to bend. This will make evident the necessity for putting the curb and the rein of mortification upon the intelligence and upon the reasoning faculties of the soul. They must be taught not to place implicit trust in the truth of the judgments which they make, or in the conclusions at which they arrive. These judgments may be inaccurate, or incorrect, or altogether false, inasmuch as they may be made upon inadequate information, or they may rest upon an assumption for which there is no foundation, or upon what is positively untrue. Even when there is a sufficiency of truth put before the mind, how many circumstances are there which either obscure or distort its view and cause it to misapprehend the plainest facts? Therefore, not only it is useful and necessary to put this curb upon the intelligence, but it is true wisdom to do so; for, if it is an axiom that there is a tendency in human nature to fall into error

—'humanum est errare'—how can anyone, with reason, obstinately persist in believing himself to be infallibly right in the judgments which he forms, and in the conclusions which he draws?

A spirit such as this is sternly condemned in the Sacred Scriptures which liken this obstinate persistence, to the sins of witchcraft and of idolatry: 'It is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel,' (by following one's own judgment), 'and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey.'[1] With good reason is it condemned; for, he who prefers to follow his own judgment when he finds it in collision with that of prudent and religious men, really looks upon it as an oracle; it is invested, in his eyes, with that unerring truth which is to be found in God only, or in those who are divinely appointed to speak with His infallible voice; he consults it as men used to consult the divining spirits of old, and trusts it with the same unhesitating faith with which they believed in them. It is his idol, and he falls down before it and worships it. He is angry and surprised when men will not join him in bending before it with equal reverence and submission. The peril of this disposition is so great, that it ought to make men eager and willing to curb and crush that pride of intellect which is the ruin of so many of the truly great. It causes them to discard the sage experience of generations of wise men; it makes them endeavour to bring into submission to their judgment and to their reason, persons and things before which they should rather bend with lowly reverence and humble faith; it makes them criticise and contemn all that does not meet with their approval. What is usually the result of this? They fall into the grossest error, and oftentimes end by believing in nothing but in themselves. In order, therefore, to enable them to mortify their intelligence, let them pray earnestly to God to give them true light; then let them repress too great curiosity, and let them not aspire 'to be wiser than it behoves them to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety;'[2] and finally, let them remember that for all

[1] Kings xv. 23. [2] Rom. xii. 3.

their judgments they will have to give an account before the dread tribunal of Almighty God.

Now, if the memory recalls past impressions, in order to put them before the intelligence; if the intelligence, from these impressions, forms its judgments, and, by reasoning upon these judgments, draws conclusions, simply and solely in order to put them before the will for acceptance or for rejection, it is manifest that the curb of Christian mortification must, in a very special way, be put upon this noble faculty. For the other mental powers are its purveyors. The will itself is their king, and it directs them in the way it would have them go. It holds in its hand the helm which either guides the little vessel of the soul into the haven of rest, or madly turns its prow to the fatal rocks upon which so many make miserable shipwreck of their eternal well-being. Consequently, it is of vital importance to us that the will should choose what is right and should reject what is wrong; that it should select from among the images recalled by the memory only those which are worthy to be admitted, and should exclude all which deserve not that honour; that when the intelligence has reasoned and drawn its conclusions, the will should spurn from its presence those which are false, and should admit only those which are right and safe.[1] It will do this, if it be trained to deny itself what is pleasing to inferior nature, and not to indulge too freely in even lawful pleasures, but to be ready, from time to time, to set them aside, in order by such abstinence to strengthen its power of resistance to what is so full of seduction. Now, a very little experience of life will have served to teach us what are those things towards which the will is drawn by inferior nature, by the glowing pictures which the imagination paints, and by the specious, illogical, and special pleadings of the intelligence. They offer themselves unbidden to our senses, and our domestic foes unite in an unholy confederacy, urging us to accept them, and by the possession and

[1] It will be understood, as a matter of course, that we are not here attempting to give a scientific theory upon the difficult subject of the interaction of the intellect and the will.

the enjoyment of them to satisfy the cravings of our rebellious flesh, whose hunger, far from being appeased by indulgence, is only sharpened into a fiercer and more cruel greed. These enemies would have us indulge the gluttonous instincts of the body; they would have us yield ourselves up to its vile concupiscence; they would have us luxuriate in self-esteem and pride; suffer ourselves to be carried away by the storm of anger; and glut ourselves with vengeance upon all who in any way slight, or injure, or thwart us. Now, because of the powerful influence which imagination, memory, and intelligence exercise upon the will, there is brought to bear upon it a sort of force difficult to withstand. Nevertheless, if the will is to maintain its kingly supremacy, it must make a stout resistance to all that would urge it to forsake what the Law of God and right reason proclaim to be just. This resistance the will is enabled to keep up, by reason of the assistance which Christian mortification ministers unto it. For, by its aid the rebellious powers, whose aim is to dethrone, imprison, and enslave the will, are so enfeebled as to be rendered, comparatively speaking, harmless.

What is the reward which this self-denial procures for us, over and above the inestimable blessing of freedom from the tyranny of our passions? It causes us to be inundated with a flood of spiritual joy, instead of being intoxicated with the degrading pleasures of the flesh. It enriches us with treasures which will never perish, in return for the temporal goods which we have despised. It whispers into our ears the thrilling words of commendation which fall from lips divine, to compensate us for man's approval which we lose by serving God.

These great and glorious advantages which it wins for us ought to make us eager to practise those three degrees of self-immolation, through which spiritual men tell us that we must pass, before we can be said to be perfect as regards the denial of the will.

The first of these is, in all things to submit the judgment to the order of God. This submission would, perhaps, be an

easy matter, if what God desires us to do, and what He desires us to leave undone, were always clear to us. How, then, may we discover, without fear of deception, what the great Master would have us do? By means of obedience. God wills us to live by faith and not by sense or by the light of our own reason. Hence, He withdraws Himself from our sight, and puts in His place a Superior, a man like ourselves, and tells us that, if we hear the voice of that Superior, it is to us what His own voice ought to be. Therefore, in yielding obedience to our Superior, we shall be giving obedience to God; in doing what our Superior commands, we shall know that we are performing what God Himself wills us to do.

Therefore, the first step or degree in the mortification of our will, is to obey the commands of Superiors, without judging the why or the wherefore.

The next is, to give up our will in even those matters which are not in any way obligatory, but which we may either do or leave undone, just as it shall seem good to us. Thus, we are at liberty to perform works of piety and of devotion without asking anyone's leave; we may give alms to whatever charity we please; we may pray as often as we choose, and fast when it suits our convenience. Now, to give up our will, in even such matters as these, and never to accomplish it except under the direction and at the bidding of a Superior, refraining from action when he says nay, and girding ourselves up to good works only when he shall think fit to give the order—this is to have attained the second degree in the mortification of the will.

The highest degree, however, is to have arrived at such a state of indifference as neither to wish nor to desire what is pleasing and advantageous to self, but only what is pleasing unto God. His will and His glory will then be the only objects for which we live. To have arrived at this, is to have completely purified the heart—that is to say, as far as such a purification is possible in this life—and to be adhering to God with all the strength of our being. In

other words, it is to be perfect with that relative degree of perfection which is possible here below.

From all that we have said on the subject of internal mortification, a sufficiently clear answer has, we think, been given to the question: 'Why should the faculties of the soul be mortified?' Also, from the method which we have suggested for curbing and checking the operations of these powers, it will be easy to see in what way that curb may be most effectively applied. All that now remains to be done is that each of us should resolve vigorously to make use of this instrument, which is at once so useful and so necessary for advancing the work which God has sent us into the world to accomplish. The consciousness of our own dignity ought to be a spur to prick us onward to the fulfilment of this most important task; we are the children of God, the offspring of a noble Father; we have been redeemed from bondage at no less a price than the blood of the Man-God; our bodies are the temples of His Holy Spirit; therefore, nothing prejudicial to that dignity should ever be suffered to come before the faculties of the soul which is made in order to contemplate the face of God. Hence, when the imagination calls into existence vain, or frivolous, or wicked images, and presents them to the memory, we should shrink from them, as a man of honour shrinks from some unworthy proposal made to him by one who would have him barter his spotless integrity for a little gold. We should always act thus, if men could look into our hearts, and could see the evil which we sometimes harbour there; for, the dread of discovery would then keep our hearts shut against evil. But, though men cannot peer into the secrets of our soul, yet its most hidden recesses are manifest to the all-holy eyes of God, and He is witness of our dishonour. Therefore, O man, remember thy dignity and suffer not to dwell in thy mind any thought or any image of which thou wouldst be ashamed before men! Again; since it is God's will that we should live by faith and not by sight, we should be acting in a manner unworthy of our most loving Father if we refused to submit our intelligence

to Him, but always sought for proof that we are in error before we deign to yield. He asks and looks for submission and obedience on our part; and He wills it to be given to His representatives. If we will not do this, but if we prefer to serve Him in our own way, He will not accept our sacrifice. He does not need our goods, but He does need ourselves; and we give ourselves to Him then only when we give Him our will. By sacrificing our goods, we sacrifice something external to ourselves; by sacrificing our wills, we immolate ourselves. It is for this reason that He prefers our obedience to all other sacrifices.

Anyone who bears in mind these things, will be animated with an eager desire to mortify his internal faculties; he will forthwith set a watch upon his imagination and he will not suffer it to paint before the memory any picture that would recall either vain or dangerous images of the past; he will bow down his intelligence before the authoritative guidance of those whom God has set over him; he will so train his will to submit to and to follow the dictates of an enlightened and obedient intellect, that it will swerve neither to the right-hand nor to the left from the straight path of God's Law; and, therefore, like the strong man armed, he will keep his court, and all those things which he possesses will be in peace.

# CHAPTER XXVII.

## *BODILY MORTIFICATION.*

### SECTION I.

#### WHY IT IS NECESSARY AND USEFUL.

WHEN, by the aid of God's helping grace and by dint of watchfulness over self, we have reduced to subjection the internal powers of the soul, much has been done towards thoroughly pacifying our little kingdom, and bringing it under the rule of God. But we have not done all that is requisite. For, though there is concord within our fortress walls, yet there ranges without an ever-vigilant, active, powerful enemy full of resources, fertile in devices, unwearied in action, undaunted by defeat. To render our position more critical still, there are, in our defences, numerous weak places and wide gaps through which it is easy for him to force his way, or to take us unawares when we sleep in fancied security. Therefore, besides that internal self-repression which has aided us to bring under control the conflicting powers struggling within us for the mastery, recourse must likewise be had to another equally repressive force, which is external or bodily mortification. The combined action of these two powerful agents will make our defences complete and our position impregnable; for, while the one keeps the garrison within loyal and true, the other renders it impossible for our numerous foes to rush in upon us and take possession of the citadel of our soul. We must, in fact, behave in their regard as men do who are startled by some daring and successful burglary committed in their neighbourhood. They do not arm themselves, and

then sit at home with open doors, awaiting and, as it were, inviting the attack of the robber. They prefer to make the chance of his entrance as difficult as may be. They lock and bolt their doors; they secure their gates and windows; they arm themselves and keep on the alert. Thus must we act with respect to those external foes who aim at robbing us of the grace of God.

External or bodily mortification will aid us most effectually to do this, and our remarks upon it shall run upon the same lines that guided us in our inquiries in the preceding chapter. In the first place, therefore, we will examine why it is necessary and useful; and in the next, we will give some instructions about the way in which it may be most effectually applied.

The reasons why bodily mortification cannot be dispensed with, and why it must go hand in hand with that spiritual self-repression which keeps the soul in subjection, will begin to unfold themselves if we consider the circumstances in which the human soul is placed during this present life. Its condition is very much like that of a fallen prince, immured in some strong tower and cut off from all communication with the outside world, unless, indeed, it is such as may be kept up by means of a few trusty servants who still remain faithful to his fortunes. He is unable to look out upon the face of nature; he hears no news; he is thrilled by the pressure of no friendly hand; he depends for sustenance upon what his adherents are able to introduce within his prison walls. Now, the soul, locked up in the body which it informs, depends upon the five trusty senses for all that renders life tolerable. The eye ranges over the expanse of nature, or scans the faces of men, or peers into the books in which the world's wisdom, or its history, or its romance is stored away, and flashes the images of the things which it sees, or of the ideas which the letters convey, straight to the mental eye of the soul, just as a mirror reflects the images of the objects brought before it. The ear catches up the sounds, whether articulate or inarticulate, which vibrate upon the air,

and repeats them to the mind, like an echo which gives back whatever words we may please to address to it. The qualities of material objects are brought under the cognisance of the soul by the delicate sense of touch which is able to fill it with delight, or to make it shrink away with horror, according as those things with which that sense comes in contact are able to impart pleasure or to inflict pain. The delicious odours breathed forth by fragrant fruits and flowers, by rich gums and costly spices, are wafted to it by the sense of smell ; and thus, though held a prisoner, the soul is brought into close communion with the external world and made to share in all that it has of beauty and of pleasure. Seated within its prison walls, it is made conscious of every object that touches them ; and just as the spider in the centre of his net is aware of the particular film stirred by the ensnared insect, so the soul is cognisant of the particular sense which has been touched by the objects of the world without. It is obvious, therefore, that these senses are not only the trusty purveyors to all the soul's necessities, but the avenues through which are carried all those materials which furnish it with matter for thought, which either give it pleasure or cause it pain.

Therefore because all pleasure, all pain, all knowledge, comes to the soul primarily through the senses; because the soul stands in the relation of ruler and master to these senses which, be it observed, instinctively seek their proper objects; because both master and servants are so closely connected and so dependent upon one another that if the master does not rule the servants, the servants will rule the master, it follows that the soul should have as complete a control over the senses as a strong and skilful driver usually has over the team that bears him along. As the driver is able to turn his horses this way and that, to hurry them forward, to hold them back, to bring them to a standstill, so should the soul be able to rule and govern the senses which minister to its wants. It should prevent them from fastening themselves upon those things upon which right reason and the divine Law

have set their ban. With respect to those which are the legitimate objects of the senses, it should study to keep the senses within due bounds, and not suffer them immoderately to indulge themselves, as they will certainly do, unless they be restrained. In order more easily to effect this, it must, from time to time, deprive them of even that which it is quite lawful for them to enjoy. Finally, it must accustom them to endure patiently that from which they shrink with instinctive loathing, in order to punish them for unlawful past indulgence in forbidden pleasures.

All this is nothing more than saying in a roundabout way, that the soul must mortify the bodily senses, in order to prevent them from introducing into the soul a herd of ferocious passions which will enslave and degrade it in this world, and cover it with never-ending ignominy in the world to come. The apprehension of any eventuality so dreadful will, of course, appear chimerical to the merely natural man. The indulgence of the senses, in his opinion, cannot possibly result in anything so disastrous. For, he regards all the good things that God, with so liberal a hand, has scattered around us, as the proper objects on which the senses of the body are to exercise their powers. The senses, he contends, were made for them, and they for the gratification of the senses. Therefore, he concludes that men must carry out the design of God, and make the best of what is thrown in their way. He does not give a thought to the possibility of the senses so fastening themselves upon material things, and so glutting themselves with the pleasure afforded by these things, as to enslave the soul in a bondage most degrading and fatal to an intelligent being. He does not contemplate the possibility of their leading the soul to gratify itself with unlawful pleasures. Therefore it is that he looks upon the doctrine of self-denial, especially upon that branch of it which inflicts pain upon the body, as a species of gross, fanatical superstition, which should, of course, be banished from cultured society. But just consider for one moment how untenable is this view, which regards these holy

practices of mortification as fanatical and superstitious. Those who accept it must, perforce, set themselves up in opposition to Our Lord, to the holy men of antiquity, to the Saints, the Doctors, and the daily practice of Holy Church, in every age and in every place. If bodily mortification is fanatical and superstitious, then is Christ fanatical and superstitious, then are all those who followed Him fanatical and superstitious; for, not only they have taught the utility and the necessity for it, in order to lead a holy life, but they have proved the sincerity of their conviction, by practising it in all its various branches. Our Lord Himself, before entering upon those three marvellous years of His public life, subjected His sinless body to a fast of forty days; and when asked, upon one occasion, by His Apostles, why they had been unable to expel the devil from the body of a lunatic, He told them that a spirit of so great potency as that which held the wretched man in thraldom could be cast out only by prayer and fasting.

Therefore, fasting seems to have been held in much esteem, and to have been very generally practised in every age, by those who wished to subdue the unruly appetites of the flesh. Their daily experience taught them its efficacy in damping the fire, in subduing the impetuosity, and in breaking down the savage temper of the brute creation. They were convinced that it would do much the same for rational beings, and, therefore, whenever they perceived that the spiritual element within them was threatened with slavery, by reason of the superabundance of animal power in their flesh, or when they desired to humble the pride of their soul in order to obtain mercy, or wished to punish their sinful bodies for past disorders, they knew not of any means better adapted to effect these ends than to withhold from themselves that material food which maintains the strength and ministers to the pleasure of the flesh. Thus Josaphat, by proclaiming a public fast, obtained the aid of Heaven to overthrow the mighty army which swarmed out of Syria to overwhelm and to enslave

his people.[1] Also David, when the child which was born of his sinful lust was stricken by the Lord and about to die, humbled his soul by prayer and fasting: 'He besought the Lord for the child, and kept a fast, and going in by himself, lay upon the ground.'[2] He had recourse to the same efficacious remedy, whenever his enemies rose up against him to revile and to persecute him: 'When they were troublesome to me,' he says, 'I humbled my soul with fasting.'[3] In fact, so powerful is this remedy to free the soul from all spiritual ill, that the Angel Raphael, who was sent to lead the youthful Tobias to Rages, and to conduct him back in safety to his father's house, said that fasting, accompanied by prayers and almsdeeds, 'delivers from death, purges away sins, and procures for men mercy and life everlasting.'[4]

In the example of the great men of old we find warrant for taming the body, not only by abstinence from food, but by such mortification as inflicts positive pain upon the sensitive flesh. A penitential exercise very commonly mentioned in the Sacred Text, is the wearing of sackcloth and coarse garments of hair next to the skin. Our divine Lord alludes to this practice in those words of sorrowful and stern rebuke which He addressed to the cities in which He had worked some of the most marvellous of His miracles, and which had, nevertheless, turned a deaf ear to His earnest exhortations: 'Woe to thee, Corozain,' He exclaims, 'woe to thee, Bethsaida, for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes.'[5] It was by self-inflicted punishments, such as these, that the High Priest Eliachim besought the people of Israel to propitiate the face of the Lord and to win Him over to deal mercifully with them, when Holofernes, the general of Nabuchodonosor, was marching against them to destroy their cities, to stamp out the worship of the true God, and to set up the worship of his master in its stead.

[1] 2 Paralip. xx. 3. [2] 2 Kings xii. 16. [3] Ps. xxxiv. 13.
[4] Tobias xii. 8. [5] St. Matt. xi. 2

In response to his appeal 'they cried to the Lord with great earnestness, they humbled their souls in fastings and in prayers, the priests put on hair-cloths, and caused the little children to lie prostrate before the Temple of the Lord, and the altar of the Lord they covered with hair-cloth.'[1] Also, the heroine by whose hand God was about to effect their deliverance was a woman who lived a most holy life, and 'wore hair-cloth upon her loins, and fasted.'[2] The moment she heard the determination of the elders of Bethulia, to deliver up the city unless help should come to them after the fifth day, she called them to her house and rebuked them 'for setting a time for the mercy of the Lord, and appointing Him a day according to their pleasure.' Then she determined to put in execution the design with which God had inspired her. As a preparation for this, 'She went into her oratory, and putting on hair-cloth, laid ashes upon her head, and falling down prostrate before the Lord, cried to Him for strength'[3] to nerve her arm for a deed which her woman's hand could not accomplish alone. When calling the sinful city of Jerusalem to repentance, the Prophet Jeremias cries out: 'Gird thee with sack-cloth, O daughter of my people, and sprinkle thee with ashes.'[4] Foretelling the desolation which was to fall upon Moab, he said: 'Every head shall be bald, and every beard shall be shaven; all hands shall be tied together, and upon every back there shall be hair-cloth.'[5] Also, in the Psalms, David says of himself; 'I made hair-cloth my garment, and I became a by-word to them.'[6]

Passages such as these might be multiplied indefinitely, to show how widespread and how general was the practice of bodily mortification, to appease the anger of God, to secure His almighty aid, and to obtain a plentiful outpouring of His precious mercies. Now, what was it that gave rise to this popular conviction? Not the idea that God is pleased with the privations, the hardships, and the sufferings of His creatures, but because these practices serve to tame

[1] Judith iv. 7, 8. [2] Judith viii. 6. [3] Judith ix. 1.
[4] Jeremias vi. 26. [5] Jeremias xlviii. 37. [6] Ps. lxviii. 12.

the rebellious flesh, to subject it to the spirit, and thus to make the whole man pleasing to God. In fact, so necessary did the Apostle deem this stern penance, that he looked upon it as the distinguishing mark of those who are the children and followers of Christ. They maltreat their flesh in such a way that they may be said to have crucified it: 'They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences.'[1] He himself, as a leader of men in the way of justice, as a teacher of that sacred science which is able to save them, was no mere talker about bodily mortification, but one who, being convinced of its utility and of its necessity for breaking the proud spirit of the flesh, feared not to set himself up before others as an example of the practice of the hard doctrine which he taught: 'I chastise my body,' he writes to the Corinthians, 'and bring it into subjection, lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.'[2]

Besides chastising the body by fasting and the galling hairshirt, we cannot fail to have noticed, while perusing the Sacred Text, how carefully the holy men of whom we read guarded their senses against everything that might be to the soul an occasion of sin. In order to defend himself against foul imaginations, unholy thoughts, and unchaste desires, Job tells us that he made a covenant with his eyes, not to look upon objects that might excite within him these dangerous temptations.[3] The Wise Man bids us 'hedge in our ears with thorns, that they may not hear the words which drop from wicked tongues.'[4] In order to protect our first parents from the danger of transgressing His commands, God Himself forbade them even to *touch* the forbidden fruit.[5] They did not heed His prohibition; they did touch it. Nor did they content themselves with the mere touching of it; they went beyond this. For, hurried away by the passions which sight and touch had roused within them, they plucked and ate of it. Their act was

[1] Galat. v. 24. [2] 1 Cor. ix. 27. [3] Job xxxi. 1.
[4] Ecclus. xxviii. 28. [5] Gen. iii. 3.

followed by expulsion from Paradise, and all the woes which cease not, and which will never cease to fall upon their posterity, till time shall be no more, and the new order of things shall begin its course. The Apostle St. James bids us mortify our tongues, and prevent them from uttering unseemly, irreligious, uncharitable, and blasphemous words; and he tells us that unless we do so, and prevent them from offending in word, our religion is vain.[1]

We might quote many other passages to the same effect, but the multiplication of them, while it can add nothing to the strength of the argument, would serve only to tire out the reader, by reproducing the same idea with wearisome iteration. We forbear, therefore, and we will now briefly sum up what has thus far been established by those authorities which we have cited, and by the other arguments which we have used. In the first place, we think that it is clear that bodily mortification is neither superstitious nor fanatical; and secondly that, far from being so, it is both necessary and useful, inasmuch as the senses being to the soul purveyors of that knowledge and of that pleasure which it derives from external things, and the avenues through which matter for its thought and action is conveyed, it is but rational to conclude not only that they should be watched and prevented from introducing what is evil, but that they should be severely punished for having done so in past time.

In establishing this, we gave some few reasons to show why bodily mortification must be joined to internal self-denial, in order to enable the soul successfully to resist the attacks of the devil. We will now, therefore, point out *how* this species of mortification may be applied to the body and to its various senses; but before so doing, a few words will not be out of place upon a certain branch of mortification, commonly enough made use of by devout men, and against which a prejudice exists, among even those who find no fault with abstinence, and fasting, and the various other means employed to subdue and tame the flesh. This is

[1] St. James i. 26.

that species of mortification commonly known among Religious Men as the *discipline*. It consists in self-flagellation, either to punish ourselves for past sins, or to overcome by physical pain the angel of Satan, who is suffered to buffet us. Some authors derive its name from that verse of the Psalm : 'Apprehendite *disciplinam*, nequando irascatur Dominus,' with which this penitential exercise is usually begun;[1] and no doubt this derivation, is quite correct, as the word ordinarily employed in the Vulgate to signify chastisement by scourging is '*disciplina*. With respect to the origin of this method of punishment, at least when inflicted by another, as a preventive and remedial, or as a penal enactment, we think that it may be traced to the earliest date at which the first family inhabited this earth. In every age and in every society of men it is one of the first arguments made use of with delinquents, to teach them the way in which they ought to go. From the family circle it passed into the wider sphere of a developed family, which is a Religious Community; thence into kingdoms and empires; and now it is, or rather it was, till within a very few years, one of the commonest methods of punishment and correction for various kinds of offences against the Law. The Wisest of Men deemed its application to the youthful generation as a matter of the very first necessity : 'Folly,' he says, 'is bound up in the heart of a child, and the rod of correction' (*virga disciplinæ*) 'shall drive it away. Withhold not correction from him, for, if thou strike him with the rod he shall not die.'[2] Again, in another place : 'Fodder and a wand, and a burthen are for an ass; bread and correction and work for a slave.'[3] In Religious Orders, in which the Abbot or Superior holds the place of a father, and in which the Community is nothing more than the family upon a large scale, this species of correction finds a natural place. Hence, in St. Benedict's Rule, the rod is frequently mentioned as the avenger of certain faults, one of which is ob-

[1] Calmet, in Cap. III., Reg. St. Benedicti.

[2] Prov. xxii. 15, xxiii. 13. [3] Ecclus. xxxiii. 25.

stinacy in evil-doing; for, speaking of it our holy Father says: 'If any brother is found to be stubborn, disobedient, proud, murmuring, or in any way gainsaying the holy Rule, or contemning the orders of his elders, let him, in accordance with the precept of the Lord, be once or twice secretly admonished by them. If he does not amend, let him be reprehended publicly before all. But if in spite of this he does not correct himself, let him be subjected to excommunication, provided that he understands the nature of the punishment. But if he remains obstinate, let him undergo corporal chastisement.'[1] In another chapter he says: 'If any brother, after being either corrected, or even excommunicated for any fault, does not amend, let a sharper correction be administered to him; that is to say, let him be punished with stripes.'[2] Again; speaking of the correction of children, he says: 'As often as either children, or those under age, commit faults, and are incapable of understanding the greatness of the punishment of excommunication, let them be punished by rigorous fasting, or by sharp stripes, that so they may be corrected.'[3]

The transition from the reception of these stripes at the hands of another, to the infliction of them upon one's self, was easy and natural. Heartfelt contrition for past faults would arm the penitent with the stinging lash; a desire of suffering with Our Lord would put it into the hands of even those who had never sinned; and a praiseworthy eagerness to tame and humble the rebellious flesh would give courage to all to smite an enemy who so constantly endeavours to compass their ruin. The precise date, however, at which this system of self-flagellation came into use is not very easy to determine. Some writers attribute the introduction of it to St. Peter Damian; for, Leo of Ostia[4] writing of him, says: 'When he was on a visit at Monte Cassino, he persuaded the monks to fast on bread and water every Friday, and to take the discipline.' The custom

[1] Reg. St. Bened., Cap. xxiii. [2] *Ibid.*, Cap. xxviii.
[3] Reg. St. Bened. Cap. xxx. [4] Leo Ostiensis, Lib. III., c. 22.

thus adopted, at his suggestion, became general in all the monasteries which fashioned themselves upon the model of the Cassinese Institute ; nevertheless, though the practice of this penitential exercise was introduced by him, yet the use of it goes back to a far earlier date, which it would be profitless for us to attempt to fix with accuracy. It is not, however, the antiquity of the practice that so strongly recommends it to the faithful, but rather its never-failing efficacy to subdue the revolt of the carnal man against the sway of the spirit.

With regard to the application of this, as well as of every other species of bodily mortification, due precautions should be taken to ensure that a discreet use be made of it. For, it ought to be regarded as a medicine, and, therefore, it should be taken with the advice of a skilled physician. For, though we must all confess that we are afflicted with many spiritual diseases, and that whether mortification is regarded as a preventive or as a remedy, we stand in need of it to ward off those spiritual ills which threaten to fall upon us, to heal those which actually afflict us, and to punish the flesh for indulging in hurtful pleasures, yet we cannot be competent judges in our own case, but we must submit our ailments to the skill and the wisdom of others who will know what is best adapted to meet our special needs. Quackery is equally perilous, whether it is applied to our body or to our soul. Therefore, let those who wish to rid themselves of the faults, imperfections, and sins, which either impair their spiritual strength or threaten them with spiritual death, seek out those trusty physicians who have the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the special grace of their state to enlighten them concerning the prescriptions which they ought to give. Let them expose before these spiritual physicians all their maladies ; let them listen to their advice, make use of the remedies which they prescribe, and follow out the regime which they recommend.

## SECTION II.

### HOW BODILY MORTIFICATION IS TO BE APPLIED.

AT the same time that we urge upon all the necessity for submitting to direction in the choice and in the use of bodily mortification, nevertheless we think that there are some few general principles which may be safely recommended to all, just as, for the prevention of sickness, the maintenance of health, and the cure of ordinary ailments, there are general prescriptions which anyone who has had ordinary experience in such matters may venture to give, without trenching upon the office of the family physician. These we will now lay before the reader, and having done so, he will have learnt not only *why* he should mortify his bodily senses, but *how* this mortification may be most effectually applied.

The first is, to prevent the senses from directing their respective powers to any objects forbidden to them by the Law of God. The second is, to teach them temperance in the use of even lawful objects. The third is, to inflict upon them some penalty for past indulgence, and to uproot the evil habits contracted therefrom.

The first principle may be reduced to practice in this way; the eye, except in case of necessity and for motives of duty, must be withheld from reading all books that either professedly attack faith and morals, or that are calculated to imperil their well-being. In one word, it must be hindered from gazing upon all such objects as are of a nature to excite that concupiscence which is never completely dead within us. The ear must be closed without delay against words and discourses that pander to prurient curiosity, or stir up the smouldering fires of sensuality, or excite within us that malevolent spirit which is filled with fiendish delight when a neighbour's character is either blackened or destroyed. The taste must not, in matter of meat and drink, be gratified to such an extent as to transgress the limits marked out by right reason, or be suffered to partake of such food as the Church at certain

times forbids, or in greater quantity than she sanctions. The sense of touch, which is so keenly alive to, and which has so delicate a perception of pleasure, must be guarded from contact with objects which may impart any sensual gratification not permitted by the Divine Law. With respect to the sense of smell, the least that we can do in the way of mortifying it, is neither to seek with too great eagerness for those odours which impart unto it delight, nor to shun with over great fastidiousness those which fill it with disgust.

There are certain persons for whom the application of the second principle will, perhaps, be more difficult than is that of the first ; because, for some men, total abstinence is always an easier matter than even such an indulgence as is regulated and kept within due bounds by the dictates of right reason. But though it is difficult for them to keep the golden mean, yet the self-control requisite to do so will at last be acquired by oft-repeated efforts. This happy result would be speedily attained, if men would only bear in mind that their sensitive nature is animal in its instincts, that it is drawn impetuously towards and that it is eager to luxuriate in the enjoyment of all those objects which will gratify its cravings ; for, if they be mindful of this, they will see the necessity for submitting it to the guidance and the restraint of the intellectual part of their being. For, it belongs to the reason to portion out the quantity, and to determine the quality of the food with which the sense of taste is gratified ; when a sufficiency for the wants of the body has been ministered, it must not suffer the greed of the appetite to claim and to obtain any more. Upon it devolves the task of marking out the time for that repose which is requisite to recover by sleep the energy lost by hard labour. When that time has expired, it must break the slumber of the body and direct its forces to the fulfilment of those works which come next in the round of its daily occupations. Also, it must select the garments with which the body is covered, and suffer neither pride nor effeminacy to supply it with

those which are either richer than becomes its state or more luxurious than beseems a follower of Jesus Christ. So also in all matters affecting its ease, comfort and general well-being, a spirit of temperance must engender a wise self-restraint, which will never suffer the senses to glut themselves with the pleasure to be found in material things, but which will withdraw them from further indulgence, while yet they feel appetite, and while yet they might rationally be allowed to partake of still more.

The instinct of retributive justice will inspire every generous nature with courage sufficient to put the third principle in practice. For, when we reflect that we have offended so good a Master, so kind and loving a Father, a holy indignation takes possession of us, and an ardent desire inflames our hearts to avenge the insult offered to His infinite Majesty by the rebellion of our unruly senses. Therefore, because the eyes have gratified themselves by gazing upon unlawful objects and by drinking in evil with the eagerness and the thirst of one stricken with a burning fever, they shall not now be suffered to look upon those pleasant and lawful objects which would fill them with delight. The ears have listened to unchaste discourse which, like a scorching wind from the African deserts, has dried up the freshness and the verdant fruitfulness of our purity ; they have been delighted with the scandals which envious and calumnious tongues have uttered to blacken our neighbour's character and to mar his fair name ; therefore, from time to time they shall not be permitted to listen to soft gentle voices, or to the soothing concord of sweet sounds. The taste has been indulged until gross excess in eating or in drinking has, perhaps, done us bodily harm and covered us with well merited confusion, therefore, it shall now be made to suffer by fasting, or at least by such abstinence as will make it smart for the unlawful gratification in which it has indulged in times past.

This last method of penance is a very easy one. It may be practised by the most delicate as well as by the most robust. It consists in refusing to the appetite all those

delicacies that are merely *adjuncts* to our daily food, and in obliging it to be satisfied with the plainest and most ordinary meats, when, if we pleased, we might regale it with more dainty fare. One who is filled with the spirit of mortification will thus forego such food as fowl and game, and appease his hunger with ordinary meats. He will not, as boys and children do, make his meal off fruit, sweetmeats, and the other delicacies of the dessert-table, but, if he touches these things at all, he will do so sparingly. He will not be particular in seasoning his food with all sorts of condiments; he will dispense with many of them; sometimes he will do without them altogether. In point of drinking, he will oftentimes refrain for hours from quenching his thirst; at meals he will not drink till he has finished eating, or he will take barely sufficient to moisten his food. He will not seek for the most expensive wines; he will take the commonest, and then so dilute them with water that their flavour will be in great measure destroyed. With regard to bodily ease, he will be careful not to sit or to kneel in the easiest postures, but he will sit without reclining, or when kneeling will do so without resting his hands or his arms upon the supports.

In these and in various other ways, one who is determined and willing to suffer something for Jesus Christ, will speedily build up in himself a spirit of self-denial which will rapidly advance him in the way of perfection. But in order that his efforts may be productive of these happy results, the sacrifices which he makes must be of such a nature as to cost him somewhat in the offering of them to God. For, there are many who willingly enough sacrifice that for which they do not care; and then assume the air of much-enduring martyrs, as if they had done something wonderful, and had merited praise for their self-denial and forbearance. Thus you shall find some who will abstain from taking a morsel of cheese at the end of dinner, but will help themselves over and over again to the delicacies of the dessert; others will not partake of the dessert, but they will eat plentifully of game; others will refuse game and indulge

freely in wine. In this respect they act like Saul. They do not offer the most precious thing that they have, or what they love most, or what it pains them to part with; but whatsoever is valueless in their eyes, of that they make a sacrifice to the Lord. This is not mortification; it is selfishness, which is made still more hateful by a desire to pose in the character of generosity and self-sacrifice.

Our own reason, therefore, as well as the inspired oracles of Holy Writ and the daily practice of saintly men at all times and in all ages, clearly proves to us the utility and the necessity for joining external mortification of the body with internal mortification of the spirit, in order to make the whole man obedient to the Law of God. If, then, anything further be needed to urge us to put in practice that of which in theory we are so thoroughly convinced, it will be the wisdom which is so manifest in the actions of worldlings, who are proverbially wiser in their generation than the children of light. Look, for instance, at the privation which a man of sickly constitution willingly endures for the sake of prolonging his life. Though he is rich and surrounded by the luxuries which wealth can procure, he nevertheless rigidly abstains from the delicate meats that grace his table, from the rich wines that sparkle in the glasses of his guests, from the sports and the amusements that fill up the leisure hours of others who are in his station of life, and who are possessed of equal wealth. He gives up these in order to live. He clings to what is most precious, and in order to keep what, to him, is a pearl of priceless value, he willingly sacrifices all else.

Again; look at the athletes of whom St. Paul speaks.[1] In order to fit themselves to run in the race, at the public games, they went through a course of very severe training. They were fed simply and sparingly; they were subjected to hard labour; they were made to run, to leap, to draw great weights, to bear heavy burthens.[2] To all this rough usage they gladly submitted, in order to win a crown of leaves which they might, perchance, bear off from a crowd

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 24. [2] Horat. De Arte Poet. 412.

of equally eager competitors. Shall we not willingly do somewhat in order to conquer our worst enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil, who wish to destroy us? Shall we not undergo privation in order to win the crown of everlasting life, a crown which shall most certainly be ours, if we humbly submit to privation? Let him who hesitates, who shrinks from the pain and the labour, look at the bodily mortification which Our great leader Jesus Christ endured, and he will hold back no longer. He will pluck up courage and rejoice when he is able to feel privation and pain for the sake of such a Master. 'Ecce Homo:' Behold the Man, and see how cruelly He has been maltreated in every sense in which we, by gratifying ourselves, have sinned. His head is circled with a wreath of thorns, because our heads have been filled with evil thoughts, and foul imaginings, and pride, and ambition. His eyes are blinded with blood, because ours have feasted themselves with the sight of evil. His hands and His feet are bored through with nails and fastened to the Cross, because with our hands we have caught up and taken to ourselves whatever of evil we have found in our path, and with our feet we have been swift to run in the ways of destruction. His heart is cleft in twain, because ours has been made the abode of sin. His flesh has felt the stinging, degrading lash, because ours has thrilled with delight in the enjoyment of earthly pleasures. From the crown of His head to the sole of His foot, there is no soundness in Him, because our entire being was steeped in sin, and wholly given over to the dominion of the devil. He has endured all this to heal and to save us. Shall we do nothing to second His efforts? He will not save us without our co-operation, although He created us without any will on our part. Therefore, let him who wishes to preserve in himself the dignity of human nature, to maintain his self-respect, to defend his manhood from indignity, his honour from disgrace, his soul and his body from the vilest and most dismal of slaveries—let him shake off his cowardice; let him tread manfully in the footsteps of his

great Captain; let him be resolved that, cost what it may, his animal nature shall never be suffered to rule over that glorious spiritual being which God created only a little less than the Angels, and crowned with the glory and the honour of an intellectual nature.

# CHAPTER XXVIII.

## *THE VOW.*

### SECTION I.

#### ITS NATURE AND OBLIGATION.

ALL, without exception, who reach the years of discretion, and especially all who arrive at man's estate, must practise that renunciation about which we have been speaking; for, unless they do, they cannot be said to be carrying the Cross, or to be treading in the footsteps of Christ. If they do not do this, they will miss the way which leads to the golden gates, and fail to obtain that end for which they are breathing the breath of life. But, besides this renunciation, there is another of a higher and nobler kind unto which not all are called, but only those who are divinely marked out to tread in the more perfect way. To these it is said: 'Sell what ye have and give to the poor. Leave father and mother, sister and brother, wife and kindred, houses and land, and come, follow Me.' From such as these, God does not look for that spiritual renunciation only by which men withdraw in *affection* from all these things; He looks for far more; He requires them in *reality* to give up all and to make their renunciation perpetual. Then they are free from whatever trammels other men and hinders them from perfection; and though they are not perfect, and though they may never here below attain to perfection, yet they are in a state which, of its own nature, leads to perfection. Now, the bonds which perpetuate this renunciation are the three vows of

poverty, chastity, and obedience. Hence, before speaking in detail, of each of these, it will be necessary to treat of the nature and the obligation of the vows in general, and to inquire in what circumstances a person who has bound himself by vow may be released from its fetters.

A vow, according to St. Thomas,[1] is defined to be 'a deliberate promise made to God, of a greater possible good:' that is to say, of some good act or work, not impossible and better than its opposite or than its contradictory. In order to have a clear idea of all that is contained in this brief sentence, let us carefully examine each of the terms of which it is composed. Observe that a vow is called a *promise;* that is to say, it is something more than a resolution or purpose to do something, with which inaccurate minds are accustomed to confound it. A resolution or purpose is an act of the deliberate will, by which we wish to do that about which we have been considering, but we have not yet imposed upon ourselves an obligation to do it. A promise, on the other hand, is an act of the reason, ordered by the will, by which one man binds himself to another, to do something, or to abstain from doing something, for him. A vow, then, is a promise, and, it is added, a *deliberate* promise, in order to signify that he who wishes to take upon himself this grave obligation must have an exact knowledge of what he promises, must give a full consent to it, and in so doing he must be entirely free from all undue coercion. Besides being a deliberate promise, a vow is still further limited by the fact of being a promise *made only to God.* For, a vow being an act of supreme religious worship, by which men oblige themselves to do or to omit something in honour of God, it follows that such acts cannot be offered to any other except God. When, therefore, we hear of vows made to Our Lady or to the Saints, we must understand them as being made indirectly, indeed, to the Saints, but directly to God, for the purpose of honouring Him in His great and heroic servants. Moreover, the good thing

[1] St. Thomas II., ii., q. 86.

which is the object of the vow must be a better good than its opposite, or than the omission of its opposite. For, the person who makes the vow intends thereby to honour God; this, however, he cannot do unless he offers to Him something which is pleasing to Him; but God cannot be pleased with that which a man is enabled to offer, only because he has set aside something better. The very end, therefore, or purpose of the vow would not be gained, unless the thing promised were better than its opposite.

Of the acts which may constitute the matter of a vow there are three kinds. First, those which we are already obliged to perform, such as the commands of God; then those which are merely of counsel, such as poverty, chastity, and obedience; lastly, those which, of themselves, are indifferent, such as either entering a certain house or walking in a certain street. With regard to those works which we are already obliged by another tie to perform, they may rightly and validly be the subject matter of a vow; because although they are necessary, yet they are not absolutely necessary, for we are free to omit them if we choose. Hence, they may be vowed to God, not because we are obliged to perform them, but because we are free to perform or not to perform them. In such works as these, the vow adds a second obligation to that which already exists. This is the obligation arising from the vow. When, therefore, anyone who has vowed to keep himself chaste and pure, resists the temptations of the devil and of his own corrupt nature, he acquires a twofold merit: the merit of keeping the Law of God, and the merit of the virtue of religion by fulfilling his vow. But if he were to sin, he would burthen his soul with a double guilt: first, the guilt of violating the sixth commandment, and then the guilt of sacrilege by offending against the virtue of religion.

In matters which are merely of counsel, such as embracing the Religious State and leading a life of chastity, poverty, and obedience, the vow adds to these acts, which are in themselves excellent, a new kind of excellence, namely, the excellence of the virtue of religion; for, to do

what is of counsel, is to do a better and more perfect act than to confine one's self to what is only of precept; but to bind one's self by vow to do what is better and more perfect is to perform an act which is better and more perfect still.

Even such acts as are in themselves indifferent may be vowed to God; because they may, by reason of some circumstance, become either good or bad; and hence, when any circumstance invests them with moral good, they may be the subject-matter of a vow. Thus, a man who is addicted to drink, and who invariably gets intoxicated when he visits a certain house, may validly make a vow not to enter that house, although in itself to enter the house is an indifferent matter. So also a person may vow not to look into a certain shop window, because in it there are there exposed for sale paintings the sight of which is perilous to his chastity.

Lastly, to the words of the definition there is added the clause, *a possible good*; because an impossible thing cannot be efficaciously intended, nor can any obligation be contracted for the performance of such an act, according to the well-known adage: 'Nemo ad impossibilia tenetur.' Hence, the vow to avoid all venial sins collectively is invalid, inasmuch as it has been declared by the Council of Trent to be impossible.[1] Also all vows about vain, useless, and indifferent things, unless, as we have already explained, some circumstance invests with moral good matters which in themselves are indifferent. To these we may add all vows to do that which, in any way whatever, is evil.

The vow, thus explained, is said to be *absolute* if it is made to God without any condition whatever; but if any condition is affixed, it is called a *conditional* vow. When the person who makes the vow binds himself to perform certain actions which no one else can execute for him, his vow is called *personal*; if he undertakes, by vow, to give any object to some church, or to some shrine, or to the

[1] Sess. VI., c. 23.

poor, it is said to be *real*.[1] But the most noteworthy division of the vow is into *simple* and *solemn* vows. The simple vow is not so called because it is made without ceremony and before a few persons; nor is the solemn vow so termed because it is made with pomp and in the presence of a multitude; for, a simple vow, though made with all the ritual observance conceivable, could not be considered solemn; nor could a solemn vow, though the taking of it were shorn of all external splendour, be considered simple. These are merely accidental circumstances. They in no way affect the essence of the one or of the other. In what, then, does the simplicity or the solemnity of a vow consist, and by what difference may a solemn vow be distinguished from one that is simple? The simplicity of a vow consists in the fact that it is a promise made to God, which promise is not accepted in an absolute manner by the Church. The solemnity of a vow, on the contrary, consists in the fact not only that it is a promise made to God, accompanied by an absolute and irrevocable surrender of that which is vowed, but also that it is accepted by the Church in this absolute way. Hence, that which primarily distinguishes the solemn from the simple vow, is this acceptance by the Church of the former as solemn, and its non-acceptance of the latter in the same absolute way.

Another important distinction is, that whereas, in simple vows, the dominion over property and the power to make the contract of marriage are only suspended, in solemn vows these powers are altogether taken away. Hence, if one who had made the simple vows of religion were to break them, either by disposing of his property or by marrying a wife, although he would sin grievously in both instances, yet both acts would be valid. But far different would be the consequences in the case of him who had

[1] Examples of the vows—1. *Absolute*: I vow to God perpetual chastity. 2. *Conditional*: I vow to enter a Religious Order, if I escape death during this battle. 3. *Personal*: I vow to recite the Divine Office every day for the rest of my life. 4. *Real*: I vow to give a silver chalice to the Church of our Lady at Lourdes.

taken the solemn vows. Not only his action would be unlawful, but in addition to this it would be null and void; his marriage would be regarded by the Church as concubinage and his gift of money or of property as a sacrilegious robbery. Moreover, if those who have taken vows should wish, on account of some grave reason, to be released from them, the difficulty of obtaining a dispensation from the obligation of the solemn vow, and the comparative ease wherewith that bond may be cancelled in the case of the simple vow, are quite enough to constitute another distinction between the two. A layman, who is bound by private simple vows, may obtain a dispensation by applying to the Bishop, or to a regular Confessor[1] (that is, one who belongs to a Religious Order), but a Religious may be dispensed from simple vows by the Prelates and Superiors of his own Order, if it is exempt from Episcopal jurisdiction.[2] But when anyone has contracted the obligation of a solemn vow, either as a private individual or as a member of a Religious Order, no one but the Pope, in virtue of the supreme power committed to him, can cancel the bond which holds that man fast. In fact, so sacred, so solemn is this contract, that it was a question much disputed in the Schools whether the Pope, in the plentitude of his power as Vicar of Christ, could dispense from it. Theologians of great weight, while admitting the probability of his dispensing power, in the case of the solemn vow of chastity annexed to Holy Orders, express grave doubts about the existence of that same power with regard to the solemn vow of chastity made in the Religious State. The reason which they assign for their belief in the existence of this power in the one case, and their doubt about its existence in the other, is that they consider the solemn vow of chastity annexed to Holy Orders to be the result of only Ecclesiastical Law, over which the Pope has ordinary jurisdiction; whereas they

[1] But not from the simple vow of chastity, or from the five reserved to the Pope. See note, p. 422.

[2] They have this power by delegation from the Holy See.

look upon the solemn vow of chastity made in the Religious State as essentially and by divine institution belonging to it. However, at the present day, the more probable and more common opinion held by theologians is that the Pope, by reason of the fulness of power conferred upon him by Christ, can dispense in the case of even solemn religious vows, whenever there is an urgent reason, or whenever the common good of the Church, or of some kingdom, or of some province, may require it.[1]

Before treating of the obligations induced by vows, a few words will not be out of place concerning the present discipline of the Church with respect to simple and to solemn vows.[2] Before the year 1848, solemn vows were always taken in Religious Orders immediately on the completion of the year of Novitiate, and simple vows were taken only in Religious Congregations.[3] But since the aforesaid date, Pius IX., of happy memory, for wise and urgent reasons thought fit to ordain that, both in Religious Orders and in Congregations of Men, no one should be admitted to solemn profession till he had first passed three years in simple vows.[4] At the end of that time, Superiors are empowered to admit him to solemn vows; but if they have sound reasons for deferring that important step till the candidate has completed his twenty-fifth year, they may do so. After that time, he can claim profession as a right, and then Superiors must either admit him to take his vows, or dismiss him from the Order.

[1] St. Alphonsus, Lib. III., Tract. II., De Sec. Præcep. Decal., Cap. iii. Dub. 8.

[2] Acta super Stat. Regul. Declarationes.

[3] A Religious Order is an Institute formally approved of by the Holy See, having a special Rule and a special mode of life, the members of which Order are bound by the three solemn vows of Religion. A Religious Congregation, properly so called, is an Institute which has not the formal approval of the Holy See, and in which only simple vows are taken. A Religious Congregation, improperly so called, is an Institute which has not the essence of the Religious State, but imitates its form only, and retains some mark belonging to it, *e, g.*, the vow of chastity, or the three temporary vows, or a similar mode of life without any vows.—Bouix, De Jure Regularium, Pars II., Cap. I.

[4] This decree was extended to the whole world in 1858.

The earliest age at which anyone may be admitted to simple vows, is when he has completed his sixteenth year. These vows are perpetual on the part of him who takes them; and the power to dispense from them is reserved to the Pope. But if the General of the Order or its President, shall deem it fitting to dismiss anyone, the person so dismissed is freed from all the obligations contracted by the vows, and no recourse need be had to the Holy See for a dispensation. This power of dismissal lies in the hands of the General or President, and of his Council, and they have authority to subdelegate their power, and to commission certain good and prudent Religious to act in their name.[1] No process, however, or judicial power, is needed to execute the determination of the Superiors; it may be carried into effect when the truth of the facts for which they deem dismissal necessary has been fully established. They are, nevertheless, cautioned by the Holy See to proceed, in a matter of such moment to the person concerned, with the greatest charity and prudence; to make use of their power only for just and reasonable causes; and not to be influenced in their action by human passion or by affection. In order to impress upon them a deep sense of their responsibility, it warns them that if their proceedings be the result of the one or of the other, their consciences will be burthened with the weight of a grievous sin.[2]

While a Religious is in simple vows, he cannot be promoted to Holy Orders; but only to the first tonsure and to the Minor Orders. Moreover, although possessing radical dominion over his property, he cannot without special leave of his Superior administer, or make use of, or spend anything; therefore, before contracting the obligations of the simple vows, he must transfer the administration of his property to some trustee or to his Order, until at his solemn profession he shall make a final and complete renunciation of all his worldly goods. This profession must be an express one, and no merely tacit contract will suffice.

[1] These should be at least three in number.

[2] No one can be dismissed on account of ill-health which has come upon him *after* his profession.

While in simple vows, he enjoys all the spiritual privileges of those who are solemnly professed; nevertheless, when absent from Choir, he is not bound to recite the Divine Office; and when present, he is obliged only by the rule of the monastery in which he happens to be, which rule does not claim his obedience under the penalty of grievous sin. If he should happen to be more than twenty-five years of age when he makes his simple vows, he cannot, on that account, be admitted any earlier to solemn profession, but he must remain three whole years under their obligation before he is solemnly professed. This profession need not necessarily take place in the House of Novitiate; it may be made in any monastery of his Congregation in which the Religious happens to be when the period of his probation has expired.

In many Religious Congregations the vows are only temporary. In some they are taken for a year, and at the end of that time are renewed. In others, they are taken for a longer period. In others, again, they are perpetual, though simple, and after a certain period of years they may be made solemn. Now, although it is undoubtedly a better thing, once and for ever, to give one's self up to God by a complete renunciation of one's self, nevertheless not all are called unto Religious Orders in which such a holocaust is permitted, and therefore they must accept the gift bestowed upon them, and endeavour to double the number of talents which it has pleased the Great Master to intrust to their keeping. It is a consolation for each of us to remember that he is where he is by the will of God, and that it depends very much upon the fervour with which he lives in the less perfect state of simple, temporary vows, whether he may not obtain a higher degree of merit than those do who, though in a more perfect state, yet do not live perfectly in it. Besides, from the fact of having to renew his vows every year, or every second, or third, or fifth year, he is enabled to offer himself in sacrifice oftener than he would otherwise be able to do, and is supported amid the difficulties of the narrow way, and animated with

courage patiently to endure them, by the knowledge that his perseverance in the state which he has chosen will depend in great measure upon the manner in which his behaviour shall meet with the approval of his Superior.

Having learnt in what the nature of a vow consists, and also in what a simple vow differs from a solemn vow, we are now in a position to examine into the nature of the obligation which these vows impose.[1] Speaking, then, in a most general way, we may say, first of all, that every vow obliges the person who makes it, to observe what he has promised: 'If thou hast vowed anything to God,' says Ecclesiastes,[2] 'defer not to pay it, for, it is much better not to vow, than after a vow not to perform the things promised.' A similar precept is given in the book of Deuteronomy: 'When thou hast made a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it, because the Lord thy God will require it. And if thou delay, it shall be imputed to thee for a sin.'[3] Again; St. Paul, speaking of those widows who had violated the vow of chastity by wishing to marry, says: 'When they have grown wanton in Christ, they will marry, having damnation because they have made void their first faith.'[4] But even if the Scripture did not tell us of the binding power of a vow, our natural reason would point out to us that it is a part of that fidelity which one man owes to another, to do what he has promised, and to pay what he owes. Now, to whom does man owe more fidelity than to God, both because of God's dominion over him, and of the benefits which He has bestowed upon him? To Him, therefore, especially, is he bound to pay what he has promised, and if he does not, he incurs the guilt of a breach of good faith with God. Hence, the Wise Man, when giving the reason why vows made to God should be faithfully accomplished, says: 'An unfaithful promise displeases Him.'[5] But, we may ask, is the guilt which is the result of such an act of infidelity to God grievous in its nature, or only

[1] Billuart, De Relig. Dissert., IV., S. Alphon., Lib. III., Tract. 2. De Sec. Præcep. Decal.

[2] Eccles. v. 3, 4 [3] Deut. xxiii. 21. [4] 1 Tim. v. 11. [5] Eccles. v. 3.

light? In its own nature, any breach of that fidelity which by vow we contract towards God is mortally grievous, inasmuch as it is an offence against the virtue of religion and against that fidelity and reverence which we owe to God. For, granting that fidelity, taken by itself, binds us to the fulfilment of our promise under the penalty of only a light fault, nevertheless, when fidelity enters into the matter of another virtue which binds us under a grave penalty, as it does, when by reason of a vow it enters into the matter of the virtue of religion, it obliges us just in the same way in which the virtue obliges us, whereof, so to speak, it has become a part. In order, however, that anyone who has taken a vow should incur the guilt of a mortal sin by transgressing it, two things are requisite: first, the matter of the vow in which he transgresses must be grave; secondly, the person who has vowed, must have intended to bind himself to the observance of his vow, under the penalty of mortal sin. Hence, if all circumstances considered, the matter of the vow is light, it binds only under venial sin, even supposing that it is the whole matter of the vow, and that the person who made the vow intended to bind himself under grievous sin. Because in light matters, neither a divine nor a human law can oblige, under pain of mortal sin, even though these matters constitute the whole substance of the vow. Therefore, a vow, which is a private law imposed by some one upon himself, does not in a similar case oblige under so grave a penalty. For, though the gravity of any breach of law must be estimated by the lawgiver's intention in framing the law, and though that gravity cannot be greater than he willed it to be, yet it does not depend upon his will only; it must be estimated by the capacity also which the subject-matter of the law has for receiving a grave obligation. Now, a matter *absolutely light in itself*, is incapable of bearing the weight of an obligation binding under the guilt of mortal sin and the penalty of eternal damnation, however much the legislator may wish it to do so. Such a thing as this is repugnant to the goodness of

God, Who has never given that power to men; for, it would be unto destruction rather than unto edification. Besides, the binding force of any promise depends not only upon the intention of him who makes the promise, but upon the acceptance of it by him unto whom it is made; and therefore, as we have said before, a vow made to do some evil, or some indifferent thing, does not bind, because it is not accepted by God. Nor would God receive, under the penalty of mortal sin, a promise made about a matter which is absolutely light, inasmuch as any such promise would be imprudent, and 'a foolish promise is displeasing to God.' The only way in which anyone who had made such a vow would sin mortally, would be in consequence of acting with an erroneous conscience. It must, however, be observed, that we have been speaking about the matter of a vow which is *absolutely light in itself;* for, such matter as this may become grave, either by reason of the end to be obtained, or by reason of the circumstances accompanying it, and, therefore, it would be binding in conscience, under penalty of grievous sin.

In the next place, in order to incur the guilt of mortal sin by the transgression of a vow, it is necessary that the person who made the vow should have intended to bind himself, under that heavy penalty, to do, or to omit, that which he has promised; for, he might, if it so pleased him, have bound himself in even a grave matter under the penalty of only a venial sin. A moment's reflection will serve to make this quite clear to us; for, if we bear in mind that a vow is nothing more than a private law which a man imposes upon himself, and that any such law has, and that it can have, only as much binding force as the legislator is willing to give to it, it must follow that he who makes the vow may will it to bind him either gravely or lightly, just as it shall seem good to him, since he is the legislator in his own case, and therefore, he may, determine both to what extent that law shall bind him, and under what penalty he shall atone for its transgression.

However, this power of limitation is not enjoyed by

those who enter a Religious Order or a Congregation, and take upon themselves the obligation of the three vows of Religion. For, with regard to vows, the Spiritual Power has the same right that the Civil Power has with regard to contracts—it is able to fix certain conditions under which the vows shall be considered valid, and certain others, the non-observance of which shall make them null and void. Now, one of these conditions is, that the vows be taken in the sense determined by the Church, and by the Rule which is approved of for the Order or for the Congregation of which the person who vows desires to become a member. Therefore, the individual Religious is not at liberty to extend or to restrict the obligation of them. Consequently, he must take them as the Order wishes him; that is to say, as binding under the penalty of mortal sin, unless parvity of matter, or want of reflection, or imperfect consent of the will, renders the breaking of them only venially sinful.

## SECTION II.

### CAUSES WHICH RELEASE FROM ITS OBLIGATION.

SUPPOSING, then, that a person has made to God a vow binding under a light or under a grave penalty, or that he has taken upon himself the obligations of the three vows of Religion, are there any circumstances in which he may be released from these self-imposed bonds? Yes; these chains may be removed in one of these four ways: by the cessation of the vow; by its nullification; by dispensation; and by commutation. On each of these we will offer a few words of explanation.

In the first place, a vow *ceases* to bind when the matter of it undergoes such a change that, instead of being possible, it becomes impossible; from being lawful, it becomes unlawful; from being a good thing, or a better good, it becomes an indifferent, or a less good thing. For, in every vow there is always this implicit condition: 'I mean to do or to

avoid this in as far as it is lawful, reasonable, and morally possible.' Hence, if anyone had made a vow to enter a Religious Order, and had broken it by marrying, he would not be obliged to fulfil it on his wife's death if he had grown old, and if he were little suited for the duties of a cloistral life, the burthen of which would be a grievous inconvenience to him. The reason is that there is a notable change in the matter of his vow. Again; a man, who by a sudden reverse of fortune has lost immense wealth, and who finds himself, comparatively speaking, reduced to poverty, is not obliged to build the church or to endow the schools which in his prosperity he had vowed to God. But if he were to recover what he has lost, the obligation to fulfil his vow would once again revive. Moreover, if the principal end for which a vow is made ceases to exist, then the obligation to fulfil the vow ceases with it. Thus, if a person had made a vow not to enter a certain picture gallery, in which there was a painting which was to him an occasion of sin, he would, nevertheless, in spite of his vow, be allowed to enter it as soon as the picture was removed; for, the cause or occasion of his vow being taken away, the vow itself ceases to exist. If the picture was removed for a time only, he might, during its absence, frequent the gallery in which it used to hang. But on its restoration to its place, the vow would once again revive and come into force. But if, in order to obtain the remission of his sins, he had vowed daily to give an alms, and for some special reason had chosen out some particular poor person as the object of his charity, he would not be released from his obligation on the death of the latter, because the principal end for which he made the vow—namely, for the remission of his sins—would still continue to exist. Again; when the time during which a person has determined to keep his vow has elapsed, he is free from the obligation which it imposed. Hence, if a priest had vowed to visit the Stations of the Cross every day during Lent, he might cease to do so on the arrival of Easter. Lastly, any unforeseen accident rendering the

execution of the vow either far more difficult than was intended, or altogether impossible, will liberate the person who made it from the obligation of fulfilling it. When, therefore, anyone who has vowed to fast thrice in each week, or to go on a pilgrimage, or daily to hear Mass, is overtaken by some grievous illness which confines him to his bed, or so far debilitates him as to make either bodily or mental exertion a positive pain, he is free from the obligation which would otherwise bind him in consequence of his vow.

To make a vow null and void, is the second way in which a person may be released from the obligation of it. This release may be effected *directly*, by anyone who has power over the will of him who has vowed *indirectly*, if his power extends only to the matter of the vow. For, the vows of those whose wills, as well as those things which they make the matter of their vow, are subject to another, always have in them this tacit condition: 'If either the Superior, or he whose interest it is, does not gainsay what I promise.' This proviso is in the vows of all such as these, both by virtue of law itself—as is evident in the case of minors and of Religious in virtue of Ecclesiastical Law, and also by the nature of the thing itself; because even if no such condition existed, subjects would vow illicitly and invalidly, inasmuch as they would dispose of what is in the power of another person—namely, their will. Hence, a Superior may nullify the vow which one of his Religious may have made to spend an hour each day in meditation, when duty calls him to teach in the schools; or a father may set at naught the vow which his son who is a minor, has made, to give a golden chalice to some church or to some Religious Community.

Thirdly, the obligation of a vow may be taken away by a dispensation. To dispense from a vow is not to declare that the matter of it is not acceptable to God, or that it has no binding force; it is rather to loose the bond from the neck of him who is tied by it, or to free him from the observance of that which, by force of law, would

otherwise bind him. To do this, there is requisite the authority of a Prelate, who, as holding the place of God, is empowered to decide what is, and what is not pleasing to Him.

There can be no doubt that this power exists in the Church of God; for, Christ speaking to St. Peter, said: 'I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven.'[1] In another passage, in which He is addressing all the Apostles, He said: 'Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.'[2] Now, these words being general, must be understood of every bond that a man may contract with respect to God, which bond, in certain circumstances, it may be expedient to loose. Hence, in the case of the incestuous Corinthian, we find St. Paul making use of this dispensing power, and telling those to whom he wrote, that he did this by a free exercise of his apostolic authority: 'For, what I have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything, for your sakes I have done it in the person of Christ.'[3] Therefore, the debts which, by reason of vows, the faithful contract towards God, may be pardoned or remitted by the Prelates of the Church, in the name of God, Whom they represent.

Yet not every Prelate has this power, but only those who have spiritual jurisdiction in what is called the 'forum externum,' or public court; because this dispensing power pertains to the outward government of the Church, and it is to be seen in such acts as liberating from laws, inflicting censures, and granting indulgences. Besides, this power does not belong to Orders, but to jurisdiction. Hence, not every priest possesses it, nor is the priesthood, or any Sacred Order required for it, but only ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the external court, such as a Bishop-elect would have, although he were not in Sacred Orders at all. The Pope, therefore, by ordinary power, may dispense in

[1] St. Matt. xvi. 19. [2] *Ibid* xviii. 18. [3] 2 Cor. ii. 10.

all the vows of all the faithful; Bishops—and when Sees are vacant—Vicars Capitular, in the vows of the flocks committed to their care; Regular Prelates of exempt Orders, with their Religious; the General of an Order, with his subjects; the Provincial in his province; and, more probably, the local Superior or Prior in his monastery. Regulars deputed by their Superiors to hear confessions and approved of by the Bishop, may, in virtue of a privilege granted by the Supreme Pontiffs, dispense in all vows of seculars, in which the Bishop, by ordinary power, is authorised to grant a dispensation; and, therefore, in all personal, real, and mixed vows, only five which are reserved to the Pope, being excepted.[1] But, in order that any dispensation should be valid, it is necessary that there should be a just cause for granting it. For, as vows are made to God only, man cannot, except as His delegate, relax the bond which they induce. Now, it is a principle of Law, that he who holds only delegated authority, cannot release from the obligation imposed by a legislator, unless there is a sufficient reason for so doing. Hence we conclude that such a reason is required, as would be supplied by a just cause in order that any dispensation from the vows should be valid in the sight of God. Such causes as the good of the Church, or of Society at large, or of a family, or of the person in whose favour the dispensation is asked, are generally considered to be just and sufficient reasons for granting a dispensation from vows.

Lastly, the obligation of a vow may cease by what is called '*commutation*', that is, by 'the substitution of some other good work for that which has already been promised, on the understanding that the work thus substituted must be carried out under the same obligation under which the first obligation was incurred by vow. By commutation, therefore, he who has made a vow is released, indeed, from the obligation of doing that which he promised to God;

[1] These are: (1) the absolute and perpetual vow of chasity (2) the vow to enter a Religious Order; (3) the vow of pilgrimage to Jerusalem: (4) to Rome; (5) to Compostella.

but is bound under the same penalty to carry into effect that work which is substituted in its place. For, to commute a vow is not absolutely to burst asunder the bond wherewith it binds our conscience, but only to exchange that bond for another. All those who by ordinary or by delegated power, have authority to dispense from vows, have authority also to commute them. But those who can commute, have not, on that account, power to dispense; for, he who can do that which is less, cannot do that which is more in the same kind. But to give a dispensation is a greater act of power than to commute a vow, though both are acts of the same kind of power, inasmuch as a commutation is a kind of dispensation. In order the better to understand this distinction, we must observe that, to *dispense* from a vow, is absolutely, in the name of God, to undo its obligation; to *commute* a vow, however, is only to take away one obligation and to impose another in its stead. This second obligation does not spring, precisely and only, from the will of him who commutes the vow, but chiefly from the consent of him who accepts it, in which acceptance there is tacitly contained a vow to accomplish the work which has been substituted. He, therefore, who grants a dispensation, absolutely frees a man from his obligation; whereas he who commutes a vow, only conditionally frees him, that is to say, if he will vow something else. Hence it is evident that a commutation is an imperfect dispensation, and in its kind is less than a dispensation. Therefore, he who has power to dispense, has power also to commute; but not *vice versa*, as will be evident if we remember that he who is empowered to dispense in the third degree of consanguinity, cannot dispense in the second, because the third is not contained in the second; whereas he who can dispense in the second, can dispense also in the third, because the third degree is contained in the second.

All that has been said of the vow in general may be briefly summed up thus: it is a deliberate promise made to God of a better possible good. It is divided into absolute

and conditional, personal and real, simple and solemn. The obligation contracted by vows is in its own nature grave, but it may be determined by him who imposes the obligation upon himself, except in the vows of Religion, the obligation of which is determined by Ecclesiastical Law. These vows bind under penalty of mortal sin. The removal of the yoke imposed by vows may be effected by a dispensation granted by lawful authority; by the cessation of the principal end of the vow; by nullifying it; and by commuting the matter of it for something else.

The necessity for having accurate knowledge on all these points, in order rightly to understand what yet remains to be said upon each of the vows in particular, must be our apology for treating of them at so great length.

# CHAPTER XXI

## *THE VOW OF POVERTY.*

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## SECTION I.

### THAT WHICH IT FORBIDS.

BEFORE speaking in detail of the first of those three vows which make a man a Religious in the ecclesiastical sense of that word, we deem it fitting to enunciate what to theologians, perhaps, will seem to be a truism, but what will be necessary and useful to those who are not. It is that these vows are only *means* to an end, and not the end itself. They are nothing more than implements for the acquisition of virtues, just as prayer and alms-deeds and fasting are. For, the end which a Religious proposes to himself, as we have already so many times repeated, is the attainment of that degree of perfection which it is possible for him to reach while he is living here below. Now, the vows are only so many helps enabling him to win the prize at which he aims. Their purpose is to remove the obstacles standing in his way and obstructing his progress. For, in order to be perfect, his will must be completely within his grasp, his passions and their concupiscences under his control, his whole being unhampered by the ties and the trappings which hinder the free play of his faculties and of his powers. Chastity brings about the subjugation of the carnal man; obedience, that of proud self-will, which is the head and front of our offending; and voluntary poverty frees us from those earthly goods which either grievously retard our steps or altogether bring us to a dead stop, as is the case with those who suffer the dross of worldly wealth to

captivate the affections of their hearts. In speaking, then, of the way in which, as with a sharp blade, the vow of poverty shears through the bonds which hold us captive, we will treat first, of what it forbids us to do, and next, of what it allows us to do in the way of holding and of using the goods of this world.

The holy Council of Trent[1] clearly points out in what consists that state of religious poverty which is rendered perpetual by vow, when it tells us that 'it is a renunciation or giving up of temporal things in such a way as not to have dominion, or proprietorship, or right to use them independently of the will of a Superior; but by these words it does not mean to exclude such a use of temporalities as is dependent upon a Superior, which use may, at any moment, be prohibited by him. For, anyone who, after this fashion, holds the goods of this world and who is able to use them only in complete dependence upon another's will, is truly and really in a state of poverty. He is, in fact, in the position of a servant, who, though administering his master's property, possesses nothing of his own, but receives food and clothing from the hands of his lord. Very different, however, is the case of him who has dominion over and who is the proprietor of any temporal thing, which he is at liberty to devote to any use he pleases, and whose power to do this is not revocable and dependent upon the will of a Superior. He cannot be called poor, as we say that a Religious is poor, and if he should exercise such a dominion over temporal things, he would certainly have cast behind his back the poverty which he vowed before the altar of God.

It must be observed that, when we speak thus, we are speaking of dominion over *temporal* things; for, by taking the vow of poverty, the Religious does not abdicate his dominion over *spiritual* things. Of these he may dispose at his pleasure, without asking the consent of his Superior; for the simple reason that they are of such a nature as to be incapable of being purchased by money. He may,

[1] Sess. xxv. c. 2, De Regularibus.

therefore, without asking leave, pray for others; he may celebrate Mass for them if his intentions are left free, even though those persons for whom he celebrates keep the stipend which has been offered; he may preach for them, give them holy relics, and the like. But he cannot give away pictures, rosaries, medals, and scapulars because these things are worth money. It will be evident, then, from the definition which we have given of religious poverty, that there are many things which those who make profession of it are forbidden to do, in consequence of the obligations which it imposes upon them.

In the first place, they cannot use any temporal thing as if it was their own, but only as if it belonged to another; so that they must be ever ready to give it up, to do without it, and not to regard as an injustice, its withdrawal from their keeping. In fact, they must hold it just as they would hold a watch which anyone should intrust to them for a few moments, while he was doing something in which there was a risk of damaging it, if it was kept upon his own person. Of those temporal things given to them for their use out of the common store, they are not allowed, without permission, to give away, or to sell, or to change, or to lend anything, to interns or to externs; because to do so would be to exercise dominion and to enjoy usufruct, whereas they have nothing more than the use of them, and that too, dependently upon the will of their Superior. Hence, also, they are prohibited from receiving anything from anybody, and from keeping it, unless leave is granted to do so, for without this leave they would have it as their own. Even when things are given to them by lawful authority for their use, permission is not, at the same time, granted to do with them what they please. For, they cannot, if these are material things, either waste or destroy them; or, if it is money, expend it upon vain, or unlawful, or sinful objects. They could not, for instance, purchase wearing apparel unbecoming their State, or costly furniture for their cells, nor could they use it to procure luxurious fare. No Superior could give permission which would

legalise such proceedings.[1] But in saying this, we do not mean to imply that every permission is unlawful which allows certain acts to be done which, strictly speaking, are a vain and useless expenditure of money. Hence, a Superior may validly allow his subjects to expend small sums at cards or at any other game; for, the severity of the decree of Pope Clement VIII., in the opposite sense, was somewhat softened by Urban VIII.,[2] for the simple reason that gaming is not in itself illicit. Therefore, a Religious, with leave of his Superior, may bestow some little gifts to show his gratitude, to conciliate the goodwill of others, to preserve that goodwill towards Religion in general, or towards his own monastery in particular, or for any other good and commendable purpose. But although in religious houses, all things are possessed in common, yet no one is allowed, on that account, to appropriate to his own use either the property of the Community as a body, or the articles which have been given to individuals for their use; for, by so doing he would be acting as a master and proprietor.

If, however, a Superior will not give his Religious what is simply necessary for food and clothing, they are at liberty to accept both the one and the other from those who offer them, and to take them from the common store of the monastery even without leave of the Superior; because to refuse such things is an irrational act, and the Religious would be using only their natural right of self-preservation in securing them for themselves. But if what the Superior refuses to give is not *absolutely* necessary, but only useful and in part necessary, Religious cannot, without permission from lawful authority, either receive or procure it; for, if they pretend to be truly poor, they must be content to feel the inconveniences and the hardships of poverty; otherwise, they are of the number of those sham Religious who are willing to be poor, provided that they experience none of the ills of poverty. Moreover, Religious must bear in mind that they are bound to take a rational

[1] In Constit. Nuper. [2] Jura Clem. VIII., De Statu Monachorum.

care of whatever is given to them for their use. They are not allowed to destroy, or to waste, or to neglect it; because only the use of such things is given to them, and that use is and it must be regulated according to the Superior's intention. Hence, all officials of monasteries and of Religious Communities ought ever to bear in mind that they cannot, at their pleasure, dispose of anything either committed to their care or handed over to their administration, but they must perform the duties which such posts of trust involve, in accordance with the will of the Superior, and in a manner conformable with religious poverty.

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## SECTION II.

### WHAT THE VOW OF POVERTY ALLOWS.

HAVING seen what the vow of poverty forbids Religious to do, let us next consider what it allows them to do, provided that they obtain all due permission; and for this purpose let us first inquire what kind of permission is requisite, and what kind will suffice for lawfully accepting or for giving away, or for disposing of temporal things. The permission requisite to legalise these acts need not be an express permission; a tacit, or a probably presumed permission will suffice.[1] A permission of this kind is one which, from certain signs and circumstances, we conjecture and presume to be actually existing. If, for example, there exists in a Religious Community a custom of receiving, without express permission from the Superior, and of using such things as pens, ink, and paper, or of borrowing and of lending articles given to the members for their use, it is an evident sign that there is a tacit consent on his part. If the Superior knows that such a custom exists, and tolerates when he might easily put a stop to it, that very fact, also, is enough to constitute a tacit consent to the existing state of things. But if his toleration of

[1] St. Thomas II. ii., q. 52, a. 8.

this custom is owing to his inability to put a stop to it, because of the grave inconveniences to which such a proceeding might give rise, his sufferance would then be no sign of his tacit consent. Again; when a Superior imposes an office upon any of his subjects, he tacitly gives him leave for everything requisite for the due discharge of all its duties. Also, if he permits anyone to buy or to receive things which are needed for his use, such as pictures, scapulars, rosaries, and the like, he tacitly gives him leave to bestow them upon others.

Also, when á Religious is absent from his monastery, either for purposes of study or of travel, he may lawfully presume that his Superior assents to the expenses which he incurs, and to the gratuities and the presents which Religious of the same Order and condition are accustomed to bestow. In order, lawfully, to act upon presumed leave, we must be able, 'from signs and circumstances, to conjecture that permission is actually given.' We cannot act upon leave which we presume *would be given* if it were asked; because a present permission is requisite for a legitimate present use; a future permission will not suffice. But, as in the case in point no condition is inserted, namely, 'if permission is asked,' there is not, in fact, any permission at all, but only such as would be granted if it were asked. Therefore, as no one is dispensed from a vow who knows that the Prelate *would* dispense him if he were asked to do so; so, also, no one can have permission to act, upon the ground that leave *would* be given him if it were but applied for. In order, therefore, to constitute a truly valid tacit permission, we must know not only that a Superior *would* grant it if he were only asked to do so, but also that, taking into account his habitual disposition, he *does* actually grant it, in point of fact, and that he would not wish us, in the given circumstances, to ask for an express permission. But we cannot presume such an habitual present disposition to exist in the Superior, and, therefore, we cannot pretend to have his actual tacit consent, although, if asked, he would give his permission in every case, and

in matters of grave moment; for, religious poverty and religious obedience would then vanish into thin air, and grave abuses would spring up, inasmuch as inferiors would be acting according to their own will, and they would easily persuade themselves that what they wish for is just, and that it would readily be granted if only leave were asked. If then the Superior is what he ought to be, he will always be considered to be unwilling in matters of importance to grant this tacit permission, and desirous that his express permission should be sought for. Nevertheless, in matters of lesser moment, his present tacit consent may be presumed, not only from those signs and circumstances of which we have already spoken, but from other things, as, for instance, if he is easy in granting permission; if he who needs the permission is old in the Religious Life, or of good repute, or a friend of the Superior's; or if the Superior is absent, and there is an urgent reason for acting. Moreover, permission may more easily be presumed for accepting presents than for giving them; particularly if the objects presented are for the use of the Community, and not of any individual Religious. From these and the like signs we may presume, not only that permission would be granted if it were asked, but that the Superior's present disposition is such that he actually at the moment does consent, or at least that he does not wish his subjects to be bound by a grave obligation to ask an express permission; and, therefore, that he is not unwilling—so far, at least, as the substance of the act is concerned—that they should do what they are doing, although he may object to the way in which it is done.

Now, it may happen that Religious, through a perverse desire of exercising dominion over what they have renounced, or through fear of not obtaining permission to have what they wish for, or through unwillingness to go to the trouble of asking leave for it, will sometimes accept, or will give away, or will make use of things withheld from them by their vow; a question, therefore, arises as to the gravity of the sin committed by so doing, whether it is

mortal or venial. This may be estimated by the value of the objects which they accept, or dispose of, or apply to their own use; and theologians are of opinion that as much is requisite to constitute a mortal sin against the vow of poverty as would be required to constitute a mortal sin against the virtue of justice. But, as Religious are looked upon in the same light as the children of a family are regarded, there is requisite, to constitute a mortal sin in their case, the same amount that would be necessary to constitute a mortal sin in the case of children who steal from their parents. This sum is generally supposed to be about double the amount that is requisite to constitute a mortal sin against the virtue of justice.

From this we may gather that although it is against the vow of poverty to accept without leave, or to use, or to lend things which are not destroyed by use, yet this infraction of the vow would not exceed the guilt of a venial sin. In like manner, also, to change one thing for another of equal or of nearly equal value, though it is an act of dominion, yet it is not a grave sin, if the matter changed is not of any great value; because the monastery suffers but little loss, and the Superior, though he may be unwilling as to the manner in which the thing is done, yet he is not unwilling as to the act itself. It may, however, be asked, what kind of sin a Religious would commit who, having, with the permission of his Superior, received a certain sum of money as interest on some property held by the monastery in his name, should keep that money in his cell, with the intention of spending it and of not handing it over to the Procurator or to any other official intrusted with the management of the money matters of the Community? He would sin mortally; because he intends to exercise an act of dominion and of use, which is independent of the will of his Superior. But if he keep the money without any intention of concealing it from his Superior or of spending it, he would not sin mortally, because he does not intend to exercise any dominion or to make use of the money independently of his Superior; for, the mere

possession of money, or of anything else, without leave, does not constitute an act of dominion; because a person may possess a thing and yet he may not hold it as his own, but as the property of another. Possession, therefore, does not, strictly speaking, either give or suppose a right over that thing; and consequently the retention of it is not repugnant to the vow of poverty. Nevertheless, if there be in the Rule or in the Constitutions a formal precept which forbids the keeping of money or of anything else, and orders it to be delivered, within a certain fixed time, into the hands of the appointed official, the Religious who, after that time, presumes still to hold in his possession a sum large enough to constitute a grave offence, will sin according to the quality of the precept which claims his submission, that is to say, he will sin mortally if it be ordered '*in virtue of holy obedience*,' and venially if it be nothing more than an ordinary enactment of the Rule.

Again; if money were given to a Religious, not for his own use, or to hold as his own, or to give to the monastery, but simply to be bestowed by him in charity, would there be any violation of poverty on his part in accepting such gifts? To accept presents of this nature *absolutely*, so that it is not in the power of the donor to recall his gifts, or to dispose of them differently from the will of the Religious to whom he has given them, is contrary to the vow of poverty, even though either the money or any other object is distributed in the name of the donor; because the distributor thus disposes of the donor's charity according to his own will and at his own pleasure.

There would not, however, be any violation of the vow of poverty if, in accepting either money or other gifts, the Religious do not at the same time accept the dominion of them, but if he leave it with the donor, who is, therefore, at liberty to recall his gifts, and also to point out upon what charitable object, or upon what persons, his bounty is to be bestowed. In this way the Religious is nothing more than an agent or instrument of another's charity, and he does

not acquire any right over that which is intrusted to his hands.

It is not repugnant to the vow of poverty that Religious should enjoy what is called a '*peculium*'—that is a sum of money, or pension, or life interest, which they reserve to themselves before profession, or which is granted to them by the monastery, or by their friends, to be used with the Superior's permission, which permission also is revocable at will.[1]

The decree of the Council of Trent does not affect the practice when it says: 'Superiors shall not henceforth be allowed to grant to their subjects lasting goods (*bona stabilia*), even for use or for usufruct;[2] for, in these words it speaks of that use which is independent of the will of the Superior, and which is not revocable at his pleasure. This is clear from the clause immediately preceding: 'Let no one be allowed to possess or to hold anything *as his own*, even in the name of the convent.' The Council, therefore, means nothing more than to withdraw from Religious all dominion and proprietorship, and this is evident from the practice of Regulars in those countries in which the Tridentine Decrees are in full force, as in Italy, Spain, and Belgium. Hence, if the Council intended anything different, it must be confessed that its words are not interpreted so rigorously as the tenor of the decree leads us to expect. Again; although the individual Religious cannot possess or hold anything as his own, yet Religious, as a body, may do so. This privilege was granted to all Religious Bodies, except the Friars Minor and the Capuchins; and because it is a *privilege*, Religious, if they please, may give it up, as the Discalced Carmelites have done in Spain. Before the Council of Trent, Sixtus IV. had granted this to the Friars Preachers. To hold property, then, in this way, is not repugnant to

[1] No one professed since 1858 is allowed to have or to use 'peculium.' Decret. Super. Stat. Regularium.

[2] Sess. XXV., cap. 2, De Regularibus.

[3] Concil. Trid., Sess. XXV., c. iii.

poverty; because Our divine Lord, and His Apostles, and the early Christians, who practised poverty, nevertheless held goods in common, as may be seen from the Acts, in which we read: 'And all they that believed were together, and had all things common. They sold their possessions and goods and divided them to all, according as everyone had need.'[1] It may, therefore, be asked what power the Prelates of Regular Bodies possess over the property which is thus held by them? Are they able to dispose of it at their pleasure? Before an answer can be given to this question, we must consider the nature of the property which they possess. This may consist of movable, or of immovable goods. Movable goods are, in the first place, such things as are precious; goods which may be preserved by keeping, such as cloth of gold or of silver, precious stones, and, according to some jurists, flocks of sheep and of goats, herds of cattle and the like. In the next place they are what we may, in contradistinction, call not precious, such as wine, corn, oil, and, according to some authors, money if it is in small quantity, and if it is not destined by vow or by oath for purchasing immovable goods. With this distinction in our minds, we can now answer the question which has been asked. In the first place, the Prelates of Regular Bodies are able, without asking leave of a higher Superior, to give away, or to sell, or to change movable goods which are not precious, and even such precious goods as cannot be preserved by keeping for at least three years. Their action, however, in such matters, must be prudent, discreet, and in accordance with the customs and the Constitutions of their Order or of their monastery. The reason of this power is that every Regular Prelacy is a kind of benefice, and by common law a beneficed clergyman is at liberty to dispose among the living of the fruits of his benefice, just as if he was a secular.[2]

These Prelates, moreover, being the absolute administrators of the goods of the Community, hold in their hands, for that very reason, the right to dispense them in

[1] Acts ii. 44. [2] Navarrre, Lessius, Layman et alii.

accordance with the statutes and the usages of their Order—the consent of the Community, as a matter of course, being presupposed in every instance—because with it lies the dominion over the property held in common.

But, in the case of immovable and of movable precious goods which by keeping may be preserved for at least three years, Regular Prelates have no power to give away, or to sell, or to change, without the permission of their Superior Prelate and the consent of the Community. In addition to these conditions, there is one other which must not be lost sight of, and that is that the gift, or exchange, or sale, must be for the use of the Community. Who, then, is the Superior to whom the Prelates must have recourse in order to obtain these requisite permissions? According to some authors, it is the Pope;[1] according to others, it is the Sacred Congregation of the Council;[2] but according to Navarre, this Bull is nowhere received, and generally speaking, the head of an Order is the authority to be appealed to in cases in which the Superior or the Community wish to alienate any immovable precious goods. Therefore, the Rule and the Constitutions of each Order must be consulted, and their enactments on this head will point out the person in whose hands rests this supreme authority in all matters concerning the disposal of property which belongs to the Community.

[1] Pauli II., Bulla Ambitiosæ. [2] Decret. S. Cong. Concil., 1624.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### *ADVANTAGES OF POVERTY.*

THE young man who said to Our Lord: 'What must I do to gain everlasting life?' had from his youth kept all the commandments of God. Yet he was not perfect; for, one other thing was wanting to him, and Our Lord pointed out this when He said: 'Go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow Me.' This counsel made him sad, for, he was very rich, and he went away sorrowful. Like many another man, he wished to be perfect without paying the price at which perfection must be bought. But that cannot be; we must give up all, if we wish to have all. This idea seems to have struck St. Peter, who was present when the young man asked the question; but he was not quite sure of what nature the reward was to be which the Great Master intended to give to those who should abandon everything to follow Him, and therefore he said: 'Behold *we* have left all things and have followed Thee; what, therefore, shall we have?' Our Lord at once made answer, and to those who, in order to tread in His footsteps, should despoil themselves of the things of this earth, promised the glorious privilege of judging the world, of receiving a hundredfold even in this present life, and of being hereafter crowned with the glory of that blissful life which shall never end. Now, though we are perfectly certain that God will fulfil His promises, yet we find some difficulty in believing that He will accomplish that particular one in which He holds out the hope of a hundredfold even in the present life; and, therefore, it is necessary for us to build up our faith in this respect by examining whether that hundredfold is given in temporal favours as

well as in spiritual graces, while we are actually living in this world of sin and sorrow.

There cannot be a doubt but that Our Lord will be true to His promise of rewarding with the good things of this present life, those who leave all things for His sake; for, St. Luke makes this statement in as many words, when he is recounting the answer of Our Lord to St. Peter: 'There is no one,' says Our divine Redeemer, 'that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive much more *in this present time*, and in the world to come, life everlasting.'[1] What St. Luke calls 'much more,' St. Matthew[2] and St. Mark[3] call 'a hundred times as much'; the latter declares that we shall not have to wait for this till the fashion of this world shall have passed away, but that we shall enjoy it now, while we are in the flesh, as a sort of earnest of the greater and more glorious reward which is to come.

This is the promise of God Himself, made, no doubt, for the express purpose of encouraging those who, like the young man, might feel some hesitation and fear for the future, if they were to sell all and trust only to Him, Who called them to make this sacrifice for His sake. It is as if He said to them: 'Fear not! you shall never want. In your service of Me, temporal necessities shall never come in to turn you aside from the better part which you have chosen. I will open unto you the treasures of My providence, and in return for the little which you give up, I will shower upon you of the abundance of heaven.' If anyone doubts about the literal fulfilment of these words, let him look at the return which God made to St. Peter. The Apostle did not leave very much; not so much as many a one who in these present days embraces Religious Life. 'He gave up a few wretched nets,' says St. Augustine, 'and God poured out at his feet the riches of the world.'[4] Consider again the history of the rise and the progress of

[1] St. Luke xvii. 29. [2] St. Matt. xix. 29 [3] St. Mark x. 30.
[4] Serm. III. in Ps. cxviii. et St. J. Chrys. Homilia 7, in Ep. ad Rom.

Monastic Orders. In that history we see the exact, the literal accomplishment of this seemingly exaggerated promise of Our divine Lord. Those whom God inspired to found these Orders, divested themselves of all that others hold most dear and cling to with so great tenacity of purpose. They fled from the society of men; they buried themselves in the wooded valleys, or in the deep caverns of well-nigh inaccessible rocks; they left behind them the wealth, the refinement, the learning, the ease, and the comfort of civilised society; they turned their backs upon honours and trampled all ambitious designs under foot; they took God at His word and left *all* things to follow Him. With what result? They never wanted for anything. They did not perish of hunger. Bread seemed to rain down upon them from heaven. In many instances, the provident hand which fed the Prophet Elias brought the very birds of the air to minister to their wants. Almighty God not only fed, clothed, and housed them, He made them the dispensers of His benefits to the surrounding peoples and to distant nations. The world which they forsook, pursued them into solitude; it sought them and poured out at their feet the honour and the wealth which they despised; it bowed down its learning and its science before them, and prayed to be taught that heavenly knowledge which contemns the idols of silver and of gold before which men prostrate in obsequious homage. On the site of their lowly cells, vast structures arose, vying in majestic stateliness with the palaces of kings; and all that was great, noble, learned and virtuous, flocked thither to find a home and a little quiet for their aching hearts, wearied out with the feverish anxieties and the exhausting unrest of the world. The desert bloomed around them into a smiling garden, and the barren wastes bore waving seas of golden corn. It seemed as if God took a pleasure in showing men that they who seek first the kingdom of heaven, shall have everything else added to their store over and above the reward which shall never end. That which was vouchsafed to the anchorets, the solitaries, and the monks of old,

is granted, in a no less eminent degree, to those who in the present day imitate their glorious example. They leave all things, and they want for nothing. It matters not to them whether the money market rises or falls; they have a sufficiency on which to live and to give unto those who are in need. They care not for bad seasons, or for reverses of fortune, or for the incoming or the outgoing of political parties, all which sometimes affect the fortunes of other men; these things may now and then lessen their revenue, but they do not break up their home, or take the bread out of their mouths. Their Heavenly Father always provides for them, and they are not seen begging their bread. Our Lord promised them a hundredfold in houses, lands, brothers, sisters, and friends; and this promise they see fulfilled to the letter; 'For one home which they lose, they find a home in every country and in foreign lands; for the family which they have left, they find a family wherever there is a monastery, or a convent, or a house of their Order; for one father, they find many fathers, and a multitude of sisters and brethren.'[1] This is the hundredfold in temporal things promised by Our Lord to those who shall leave all things to follow Him.

But it is chiefly in spiritual favours and blessings that this generous promise receives its special fulfilment; and, from a thoughtful consideration of these, it will be evident how blessed a thing it is to have given up all to follow Christ. For, in the first place, such a renunciation is the surest foundation on which to build a holy life, inasmuch as by it there are swept away those disquieting cares which, for the most part, do not leave men leisure to think of their eternal interests. They have worldly possessions, a large household, a numerous family; and from these there shoot forth troubles, difficulties, and cares, with a luxuriance which is truly marvellous. They have rights which must be defended, injuries and losses which must be repaired and made good. They must go on acquiring and hoarding up and saving for their children, who must

[1] Cassian, Collat. 24, Cap. xxvi.

be educated and portioned off and established in life. The family position must be kept up; the complications which at times arise must be smoothed away; the entanglements unravelled; the bickerings and the disagreements quieted and set to rights. All these things, and a thousand more besides which will suggest themselves, require forethought and anxious, watchful care. They occupy the mind, they harass, they weary it. They leave it little time, and still less inclination, to think of anything else. Now, from all these, the vow of poverty sets the Religious free. He has no property to care for, or household to govern, or family to educate. His mind is, therefore, free from those corroding cares which eat into the very heart of other men and unfit them for the chief business for which God created them and sent them into the world. He has time to look into his heart and to see how matters are progressing there; what reforms are needed; what interests are most pressing; what dangers must be warded off. He is free to attend to these things and to give himself up to piety and to the exercises of a godly life. Hence, he has a clear field before him, ample room for the free exercise of his powers, and a solid foundation on which to begin building up the edifice of sanctity in the construction of which God wishes him to labour.

In addition to this freedom from worldly disquiet, the vow of poverty gives him every facility for the completion of this most important work, and by that means renders it a matter of comparatively little difficulty. Wealth and the duties and the cares which are its invariable accompaniments, are like so many incumbrances, hindering our movements and retarding our progress. Therefore, as a workman, in order to give free play to his muscles, throws off all superfluous clothing, and as he is thereby enabled to do his task quickly and well, so also with the trammelling cares of wealth must that man act who wishes to build up within his heart a Christ-like character. When he has once and for ever rid himself of these, he can apply himself with a free mind to the work of his sanctification and devote

to its accomplishment all his energies both of body and of soul. We repeat that this is an easy task for one thus set at liberty; as easy as it is for a traveller to walk, who has no burthen to carry, or for a swimmer to cross a river when he has cast off his clothes. For, besides having no property to fill his mind with care, he is in the midst of those who are able to assist him in removing whatever may trouble, or retard, or bring him to a dead stop in his work. If it is a doubt, there are at hand to solve it those who are wise and experienced; if it is either a fault in the work, or ignorance of the principles on which the work has to be done, there are within easy call those who are well versed in the science of this spiritual art; if it is either weakness of will or cowardice, there is the good example of those around to spur him on and to instil into his breast the courage which animates their own brave and steadfast hearts. Their virtues will, at one and the same time, instruct him and push him on to imitate, to rival, and it may be even to surpass them. When he grows cold, their fervour will rebuke him; when he breaks forth into anger, their meekness will put him to shame; when he swells with pride, their humility will be a silent monitor in whose eyes he will read: 'Remember, proud man, thou art but dust.'

Moreover, when men have renounced the wealth of the world, and when they are really striving to divest their hearts of that greed for having and for holding which is so deeply ingrained in the fibres of our being, they are rewarded by God with a peace which surpasses all understanding. For, this peace is the outcome of their contentment with the state in which they find themselves; and this contentment is nowhere greater than in the heart which neither seeks nor desires to possess anything of earth, but which is rather disposed, if it was possible, to give up more and more. In return for thus despising the wealth of the world, God more abundantly rewards them than He does any of His other servants. He makes them His own, in a very special way, just as under the Old Law were the Levites and the Priests, who, having no inheritance in

Israel, were privileged in having God as their possession: 'They shall have no inheritance,' He says, 'for I am their inheritance: neither shall you give them any possession in Israel, for I am their possession.'[1] Having God as their portion, the source of all spiritual wealth and sweetness, what a treasure do they not hold in their hearts! Their life is as a never-ending feast. They have the peace, the joy, and the serenity which spring from a good conscience that is at rest in God, that fears no evil, because it knows no sin. They taste of that sweetness which springs from commerce with the living God; they are inundated with the ceaseless influx of divine grace; they are fed with the manna of His consolations; they drink of the waters of His heavenly Spirit; they are inebriated with the plenty of His house; and they feel in very truth that, having left home, and brethren, and father, and mother, and lands, they receive a hundredfold more even in the desert and exile of this world.

As for the reward which is to come, that also, in a certain sense, may be said to belong to Religious even in this world. For, resting on the word of Christ, they know and they are sure that the kingdom of heaven, that life everlasting will be theirs, or rather, that it is theirs now, while they live here below, amid the troubles, the disquietudes, and the miseries of this vale of tears. For, when speaking of those who are poor in spirit, Our divine Lord does not say, theirs *shall be* the kingdom of heaven, but theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven. It is theirs, in effect, just as an estate which a father will leave to his son, belongs to that son. He has a right to it, and on his father's decease, it will be his. In this way the reward of heaven is in this life the portion of the Religious. It is his by right of inheritance. He has but to pass out of the darkness and the mists of time into the bright light of the world to come, and straightway the glorious heritage falls to his lot, and he enters into the possession of its privileges and its joys. Therefore, by looking forward to that blissful moment, he

[1] Ezech. xliv. 28.

has a foretaste of its unutterable delights; he is able thus to partake somewhat of the hundredfold of the future, even in the present time; and, in a certain sense, to receive his reward while in exile here below. But what do we mean when we speak of that kingdom—of that life everlasting, which is to be the crown of a life of poverty endured voluntarily for Christ's sake? Alas! when we try to speak of it, we babble like children! Of its entrancing joys, fancy can give us but a faint, shadowy idea which falls infinitely short of the great reality that is awaiting us in our Father's home; 'for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath the heart of man been able to conceive, the nature of the happiness which is there stored up for us.' All that we can say is, that we shall be with God; that we shall gaze upon His beauty, and feast upon it, and throughout eternity find ample food for the highest mental activity, in the contemplation of that infinite beauty and perfection. We shall be with the Saints and the Angels of God; we shall be their fellow-citizens; we shall converse with, and love them, and we shall be by them beloved.

Lastly, we can, in the same way, enjoy the thought of that public reward which is to crown the hundredfold of this life, when Christ shall come in glory and majesty to judge the living and the dead. He makes special mention of this, as an ingredient of the cup of bliss which He is to hold to the lips of His elect; as part of the reward for their abstinence from the fleeting intoxication of earthly pleasures; and, therefore, we may have the joy of its anticipation even here below. On that great accounting day, on that first day of the new order of things, He will seat the poor—those who have given up all in order to imitate Him in His poverty—upon thrones to judge the world, and the countless generations of men. The eyes of those who, in the days of the flesh, regarded them as fools for trampling under their feet the pleasant things of life, shall gaze upon them with a kind of stupefied wonder, seeing them in so high honour, while they themselves are held in derision. The wicked shall stand before them, cowering

with fear and shame, to be judged by them, and to be by them condemned. In the heyday of their pleasure and of their forgetfulness of God, they considered a life of virtue to be impossible; and now God will point to those who are seated with Him as judges, to their lives of purity, of humility, of self-restraint, and of unselfishness, and these will convince the wicked of their fatal error. The poor in spirit will condemn them, because they made wealth their god, instead of estimating it at its right value, and despising it as worthless dross. They will condemn their pride, by contrasting with it the lowliness of their own lives, which were hidden with Christ in God. They will condemn their sensuality, by showing how they crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences. Of them the Great Judge will say: 'They fed Me, they clothed Me, they gave Me to drink, they consoled Me, they visited Me. As for you, you did none of these things! I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink; naked, and you clothed Me not; sick, and you did not visit Me; in prison, and you did not comfort Me. Therefore, depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity!' Then with Him the poor shall lift up their voices, and shall re-echo the sentence of everlasting doom; then, with songs of triumph they shall be caught up into the skies, and ushered into the home of their Heavenly Father, to inherit that joy and that glorious kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world—the hundredfold of those blessings which they have tasted even in this valley of tears, both by actual fruition in some respects, and by the joy of anticipation in others.

These, then, are some of the advantages which spring from the vow of poverty, advantages which are enjoyed by Religious in this life—a hundredfold in even temporal blessings —a hundredfold in spiritual graces— a hundredfold in the joyous anticipation of the wealth and the happiness of that world to come, which are so great, so far beyond anything of which we have familiar experience, that by the wildest flight of our imagination we cannot form an

adequate idea of them. When, therefore, the burthen of poverty presses heavily upon us, we must encourage ourselves manfully and with cheerful submission to bear it, by the thought of what is awaiting us beyond the veil which hides our true home from our eyes. When the inconveniences and the hardships to which it exposes us make us wince and shrink back and look with covetous eyes upon the good things which we have abandoned for God's sake, let us turn with the eyes of faith to the good things stored up for us in the treasure-house of God. We shall be satiated with the abundance of His garners, we shall be inebriated with delight when the glory of His presence shall at last shine upon us. What the world and the devil offer to us, to make us turn aside from the way in which God would have us walk, is only dust, is fruit, fair, indeed, to behold, but incapable of satisfying the craving gnawing at our heart. When we take it into our hands, it crumbles away at our touch. It is a little ease that the devil offers, or they are creature-comforts, or it is honour, or position, or power; and the poor heart is drawn to his baits as the fish is attracted by the glitter of the metal which hides the deadly hook. Let us not be deceived; let us use our reason; these things are but empty toys which may amuse us for a time, but which cannot give us any lasting content. Therefore, let us despise them as being worthless in themselves and beneath our notice; and, clasping the treasure of our poverty to our heart, 'let us press onward to the reward of our supernal vocation.'

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### *THE VOW OF CHASTITY.*

GREAT is the sacrifice made by a Religious when he binds himself by the vow of poverty; for, he thereby renounces that wealth which men hold in so high esteem, and deprives himself of the right ever to possess anything as his own. Yet, generous as is the offering which he then places upon the altar of God, it is far surpassed, in point of self-renunciation, by that other which he lays at the feet of the Divine Master when he takes upon himself the obligations of the vow of chastity. For, by poverty he gives up what is external to himself; but by chastity he vows a daily and hourly self-crucifixion, which is accounted by many to be more grievous and more meritorious than a cruel martyrdom. As these obligations regard both his body and his soul, it is necessary that we should examine into them, and should see what is that which he binds himself to do when, in the face of heaven and of earth, he solemnly vows chastity unto his God.

In the first place, this act entails certain obligations which affect his body. Not only the Religious, but every man that is washed in the regenerating waters of baptism, is by that sacramental act constituted a temple of the living God, in which the Holy Spirit abides till sin renders it impossible for Him to dwell there any longer. In consequence of this solemn dedication to the service of God and of this mystical adoption into the number of His children which is a result of it, each of us is obliged to preserve himself from all that defilement so strictly prohibited by the sixth and ninth Commandments of God. Nevertheless, we are not excluded from those pleasures which, under

certain conditions, are quite permissible, and which each of us is at liberty to enjoy on fulfilment of those conditions. But, when anyone takes upon himself the obligations of the vow of chastity, he thereby deprives himself of that liberty of which the generality of men avail themselves, and by a solemn act consecrates his body to the service of Jesus Christ. From that moment he ceases to belong to himself. He is the property of Jesus Christ. He is pledged before heaven and earth not only to avoid all the prohibited sensual gratifications of the flesh, but to abstain from such as in the married state, are sanctioned by the Divine Law. This renunciation being a matter of counsel only, is left to the free choice of all, and no one is ever suffered to take upon himself so heavy a burthen, unless he feels that he has a special call from God to do so. It is to this call that Our Lord referred when He said: 'All receive not this word, but they to whom it is given, he that can receive it, let him receive it.'[1] Therefore, he who is conscious of this internal impulse, and who hears the voice of God sweetly inviting him to make the sacrifice, should give heed to the call and generously commit himself to the guidance of God. Having done this, he must remember that the vow affects all the senses of that body thus consecrated to the divine service, and deprives him of the liberty which might be his if God did not call him to higher things.

It places a guard upon the eyes and restricts the range of their vision to such things only as will not excite any desire of sensual pleasures. For, the eye, by its wonderful power flashes upon the mental vision of the soul a most exact representation of everything that falls beneath its glance. Upon this the soul looks; it admires; it loves; and, if the thing loved is a sinful object, the soul is defiled by the love of it. Therefore, the vow of chastity forbids us to look upon anything that would imperil the purity of the soul. It does this with good reason; for, through the eyes as through windows, the devil and the world effect an entrance, and leaguing with our own sinful flesh, steal away

[1] St. Matt. xix. 11, 12.

the treasure of God's grace and the precious pearl of our chastity. If we search into the genesis of the first sin that was ever committed by man, we shall find that it had its origin in the steadfast gaze which Eve fixed upon the forbidden fruit; and this fact should suffice to prove to us the necessity for guarding with unwearying vigilance those most vulnerable places in our defences. The Sacred Text seems to insinuate not only that, with wise precaution, she had not touched the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil, as commanded by God, but that she had not even looked at it. For, after recounting her temptation by the serpent, the inspired writer goes on to say: 'And the woman *saw* that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the *eyes*, and delightful to *behold*.[1] In these words, he repeats no fewer than three times that her eyes were the gates through which the desire to disobey the positive order of God had entered her soul. That which was so fatal to her, has been fatal also to a multitude of others, whose misfortune should serve for our instruction. David sinned with his eyes before he fell into that foul offence which led to the murder of Urias, and which was the fruitful source of all the ills that ever after haunted his house. Holofernes 'was caught by his eyes,' to his own destruction, by the beauty of Judith. The same may be said of almost every one of whose spiritual downfall we read in history. His eyes have been the robbers and murderers of his soul. The truly wise know this thoroughly well, and make a covenant with their eyes never to look upon what might stir up the evil passions slumbering within them. They are fully persuaded that, if their eye be simple and not evil, their whole body will be lightsome; but that if it be evil, their whole body will be in darkness. Now, who should know this better and act upon it with more scrupulous care, than those who have vowed their chastity to God? By making their vow, they have not changed their nature; it is as strong and vigorous as ever. Therefore, let them take heed and beware of that fatal self-confidence which is

[1] Gen. iii. 6.

fostered by the devil. He may persuade them to be incautious, or to look but *once* upon what they should never see; but the eye is not filled with seeing; it will never have enough, and it will still drink in what gratifies its curiosity, till the subtle poison has utterly ruined the chastity of the soul.

Again; the vow of chastity places a curb upon our tongue. It forbids us to say anything that is impure, and the sin which we commit by giving utterance to words of this nature must be measured, as are all other sins of the tongue, by the intention with which we speak, by the nature of the things which we say, and by the scandal which they are calculated to give to those who may chance to hear them. St. Paul, writing to the Christians of his day, forbade them to mention even the names by which those hideous crimes against chastity are designated: 'Let them not so much as be named among you.'[1] What, then, ought we to think of the Religious who should so far forget the sanctity of his State as to defile his tongue? Those faults which in other men are considered venial, in him would be regarded as enormities. Hence, the necessity for setting a gate of prudence before our lips, and for making a compact with ourselves not to offend in word. By this, we do not mean simply that the Religious should abstain from speaking what is positively impure—if he did not do so, he would be a monster of iniquity—but that he should be scrupulously nice in withholding his lips from the utterance of even words that are, in the slightest degree, unbecoming; for, if he do this, there will be no danger of his offending in a more grievous way. He will get the mastery over that unquiet evil, which is as a flaming fire ignited by the sulphur of the lower pit; and, having subdued that, he may feel certain that his religion is not vain.

But while the vow of chastity forbids the speaking of impure words, and thus puts a curb upon our lips, it lays a no less stringent prohibition upon the hearing of impure discourses, and thus plants a hedge of thorns about our

[1] Ephes. v. 3.

ears; for, it stands to reason that we may not willingly listen to that of which we may not lawfully speak. This prohibition is specially strict with respect to all matters of this kind, because of the extreme peril to which they expose the soul. For, words are the symbols of ideas. They convey, under a compendious form, a great deal of knowledge, and by their instrumentality, evil as well as good is made known to the soul. If the soul was heretofore in happy ignorance of evil, they open its eyes to see, to know, and unfortunately but too often to embrace and to take evil to its bosom. But even if the soul is already cognisant of the evil knowledge which such words impart, nevertheless, the hearing of them once again, draws aside the veil of forgetfulness and paints that evil before the mind in all the fascinating and gaudy colours which fancy knows so well how to employ. With regard to evil words, we may liken our minds to a stringed instrument, which echoes responsive to every sound that makes the air vibrate around it. Hence, the care we should use to prevent ourselves from ever hearing anything that might convey to our minds a knowledge of evil which we are not required to know. Knowledge is good; and some men are called upon to know evil in all its hideous details, just as physicians and surgeons are expected to know and to understand all the foul diseases which afflict our poor humanity. But this knowledge is not requisite for all; and, therefore, when we are not obliged by reason of our office to search it out, it is best, as St. Gregory says, to remain 'wisely ignorant.'[1] It will serve no other purpose than to fill our imagination with loathsome phantoms which will haunt, disturb, fill us with vain fears, and perhaps become for us a source of grievous temptation. Therefore, it is a blessed thing not to know that which we are not called upon to know; for, 'Ignorance is bliss, where 'tis folly to be wise.'

Now, while the vow of chastity directly prohibits the seeing, or the hearing, or the touching, or the speaking of anything forbidden by the Law of God, it at the same time

[1] II. Liber. Dialog.

indirectly forbids everything that may lead to the violation of that Law. Chief among these is pampering the body by excess in the use of what contributes to its well-being. Therefore, as the body, in all its instincts, is animal, and as it tends to gratify those instincts, just as do the brutes which perish, it will follow that in exact proportion to the body's vitality and energy will be the vehemence with which it will seek for whatever is flattering to the animal man. This vitality and this energy, or, as we may say, this animality, is maintained in full force and vigour by the food with which we sustain our life. Therefore, if that food be taken in excess, or if it be of such a quality as to inflame the blood and augment the humours till every nerve is tingling with an over-abundance of vital force, the body, naturally enough, will overleap the barriers which both reason and the Law of God have set for it. It will be guilty of excesses which even reason vehemently condemns. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that those who purpose to lead a life of chastity should keep that vital energy within due bounds, and that they should never suffer it to acquire so great force as to overpower the strength of the reason. But how is this to be done, unless it is by withholding that aliment which feeds, maintains, and augments their bodily strength? Hence, if in their own hearts they wish to hold the reins of government, they must be sparing in their meat and drink, they must not be too dainty in their fare, or seek in it the gratification of their taste, but only the appeasing of their hunger. Their aim must not be 'to live in order that they may eat, but to eat in order that they may live.' If this method of proceeding will not suffice to give them a mastery over themselves, they must beat down the pride and diminish the strength of their foes by fasting, which is a most effectual means for taming the haughtiest spirit, and making it obedient to the slightest dictate of the rational will.

These, then, are the duties which the vow of chastity requires from us with respect to our body. There are others which it demands from us with respect to our soul,

and of these we will now proceed to treat. If chastity would have us be as pure in body as if our flesh were impassible, it furthermore requires us to be pure in thought and in desire, and to have our will averse from everything that could tarnish or dim its dazzling brightness. Yet, although it exacts a great deal from us, it does not ask for that which is impossible. It does not require that no foul image should ever flit before our imagination, or suggestion excite our concupiscence, or filthy thought trouble the calm of our reason, or burning desire shake the fixed resolve of our will. For, we are a fallen race; and though the sin which made us lose our high estate was pardoned and washed away by the blood of Christ, yet the fatal effects of it still remain and make themselves felt by the ignorance which clouds our intellect, by the weakness which paralyses our will, and by the revolt of our carnal nature, which fills us with confusion. All this engenders unrest and strife. An incessant war is, consequently, ever going on within us; the spiritual element fighting against the carnal element, the carnal element fighting against the spiritual element. Hence, the origin of the evil imaginations, the foul thoughts, the abominable desires, which affright, disgust, and make us hang down our heads with shame. But foul and disgusting as they are, they do us no harm unless they are wilfully accepted and entertained. They may suggest evil to us; they may solicit us to accept it; they may entangle and worry us; but they cannot force the consent of our will. They are not forbidden by the Law of God; and they cannot be hindered by the vow of chastity. But what the Law of God and the vow of chastity *do* prohibit, is either the wilful thinking or the desiring of the evil which they present to our imagination and suggest for acceptance to our will. The moment our intelligence adverts to their presence, the vow of chastity calls upon the will to reject them with horror. If the will does not do so, if it retains the evil, thinks upon it, and takes pleasure in it, we sin and break the vow as well as the Law of God.

This may be done in one of these three ways: by taking pleasure in the evil which, by means of the imagination, is represented as actually present; by joy in the contemplation of some past evil action committed either by one's self or by another; by desire of the evil of which we think. To indulge the soul, then, in any one of these three ways, we repeat once again, is a grave sin against chastity. For, when a man takes pleasure in the contemplation of a picture of evil, represented to his imagination by the fancy, he shows that he has an affection for an evil object; and this is repugnant to reason which should hate every inversion of right order, as well as displeasing to God, Who, being infinitely good, must hold in abhorrence that which is opposed to His infinite sanctity. It is for this reason that the Sacred Scriptures, speaking of these thoughts, say: 'they separate from God;[1] they are an abomination to the Lord;[2] they make those who love them as hateful to God as are the objects in which they take delight.[3] Again; by indulging in an unholy joy over some past evil act committed by one's self or by another, the soul shows beyond a doubt that it approves of the act, and thereby once again accepts and embraces it. Lastly, to desire to commit evil, even though the evil is not actually committed, is a sin; for, it indicates that the will has gone forth towards the prohibited act, and has taken it to itself. Hence, the Law of God forbids us to desire any evil, saying: 'Thou shalt not covet,' and Our divine Lord has declared that by desiring to commit any evil, the person who thus allows his will to be carried to the coveted object, is guilty of the act which he wishes to commit: 'Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.'[4]

Now, this being so, it will follow that the vow of chastity requires us to be vigilant, always on the alert to reject these images and to stifle the thoughts and the desires which they suggest to the intelligence and to the will; and this it exacts

[1] Wisd. i. 3. [2] Prov. xv. 26. [3] Osee ix. 10.
[4] St. Matt. v. 28.

for the simple reason that if we are obliged to attain any end or object, we are also obliged to take the means which conduce to the attainment of it. Hence, we must not suffer either an evil image or a wicked suggestion to remain in our minds for a single instant after we have become conscious of its presence. Such thoughts and images are fiery sparks shot up from the lower pit; if they be not at once shaken off they will blacken and burn; nay, they will cause so great a conflagration as will destroy our spiritual life. Therefore, there must be no hesitation about rejecting them, no deliberation about our choice. Promptitude of action is then the only thing that will save us; and when once we have acted, there must be no curiosity, no looking back.

These are principles of action which the masters of the spiritual life have drawn up after long and wide experience in dealing with souls. Those who have doubted either their wisdom or their soundness have had reason to repent of their scepticism. For, just consider for a moment the nature of the evil which they are devised to withstand. It is an evil with which everything in the natural man sympathises, and towards which his fallen nature tends. The eye is eager to contemplate it; the ear to give unto it every attention; the senses of the body to take it to themselves and to enjoy it. Our fellow men, both by word and by example, solicit us to accept and to make it our own. Their poetry sings of it, their art embellishes it, their philosophy tends to break down whatever may oppose it. Moreover, the spirits of evil, though despising and loathing it, as being beneath their intellectual nature, are unceasing in their efforts to insinuate its venom into our hearts; because there is no other evil that so degrades us in the eyes of God, and so effectually blots out His image from our souls. Our position, therefore, with respect to this evil, is like that of a man standing upon an inclined plane. Our foot-hold is insecure, our upward way laborious, demanding all our care, requiring us to put forth all our strength. Hence, to suffer a dangerous thought to enter the mind or a lascivious image to rest there, is like receiving a push

downwards. To hesitate or to deliberate then, is certain death. The muscles of our limbs relax, the feet slide, we begin to move, to run, to rush down headlong, and moral death by a plunge into the abyss of sin is the inevitable result.

Wise, therefore, is the counsel of the old heathen poet: 'Principiis obsta'—resist the very beginnings of evil. Those who act thus are safe. We may hinder a conflagration by putting our finger upon a spark, or save a huge vessel by stopping a leak, or ward off death by a timely remedy; so, also, by the prompt ejection of an evil image, we may save our heart from the fire of impurity, our virtue from shipwreck, and our soul's life from the jaws of eternal death. It is for this reason that the Sacred Scriptures and the masters of the science of the Saints are so eager in counselling us to resist the very beginnings of evil. They exhort us to kill the enemy of our souls while he is weak and little; to dash him against the rocks as conquerors used to dash the children of their foes; to beware of evil desires, because death sitteth close to the entrance of delight.[1] With good reason are they thus earnest in their exhortations and warnings. For, in fighting against impurity, we have to contend with a foe upon whose face it is sinful wilfully to look, about whom it is sinful to think with pleasure, from whom it is sinful not to flee away the moment that we are conscious of his presence. Therefore, our contest against him is victorious only when it consists in flight.

These, then, are the obligations which we contract both with respect to our body and with respect to our soul, by vowing chastity unto God. We take upon ourselves this yoke, in order to be free from the duties and the distractions of a worldly life, and to give ourselves wholly to the service of God. We consecrate our entire being to Our Lord, and, therefore, our aim should be to love Him only. Consequently, there must be no division of our love between Him and creatures. If we love them at all, it must be in Him and for Him. If our love of them is not

[1] Reg. S. Bened. Prolog: et Cap. vii.

of this nature, it is an earthly love, a carnal love, a love dangerous to our chastity. God is a jealous God. He will not accept a divided heart. Either He must have all or He will have nothing. When the heart is divided, He withdraws and with Him depart His special graces and fatherly watchfulness over us. Then we grow tepid and careless; we fall into many defects and sins; our spiritual eyes grow dim and we see not sin in all its hideous deformity or perceive the danger towards which we are hastening. We begin not to fear that of which we ought to be in greater dread than we are of death itself; and we do not fear because we do not see. Thus we go on from bad to worse, till at last either we fall into some grave offence against our vow, or we are mercifully roused from our carelessness and made aware of our peril by some extraordinary grace of God.

Let us not be foolhardy in point of chastity. A fall even in Religion is not an impossibility. The history of others who after years of fidelity have fallen into the mire should make the words of the Apostle ever ring in our ears: 'Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall.'[1] It is by self confidence, by the proud idea that we are so fixed in virtue that nothing will be able to move us, that we come to fall. Therefore, let him who wishes to keep inviolate his plighted word to God, never deem himself secure. The devil can find his way into the anchoret's cell and into the solitary's cave. He can effect an entrance into the human heart, though its breastplate is a hair-shirt, and its sword the galling scourge, when that heart does not fear his first approach. Therefore, be on the watch, and flee from the face of the unclean devil. 'In this warfare only cowards are victors.'

[1] 1 Cor. x. 12.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### *MEANS TO PRESERVE CHASTITY.*

THE obligations of those who dedicate themselves to a life of chastity are undoubtedly very stringent. They entail a species of daily and hourly self-crucifixion which it is very hard for flesh and blood to endure. Yet, heavy as these obligations are in themselves, they are rendered still more burthensome by the savage and persistent hostility of the devil, whose constant endeavour is to pluck from the centre of our hearts that beautiful virtue which the vow encircles as with a protecting hedge. He hates it, because it is to the soul as a patent of nobility; he wishes to destroy it, because it is a source of inestimable graces, and it will be crowned in heaven with a glory which will never fade. It is, consequently, in continual peril, and those who are determined to hold and at all costs to defend it, must employ the means which will ensure its safety. Some of these are supernatural and others are natural; for, God helps only those who are willing to help themselves. He bestows supernatural graces upon those who for their worthy reception, prepare natural means as a kind of gold setting in which to encase God's jewels of priceless value. In order, therefore, to have a thorough knowledge of the chief means recommended by spiritual writers for the preservation of this most delicate of virtues, we will consider them one after another, beginning first with those that are natural.

The chief place among these is usually assigned to bodily mortification, in whatever way it may be applied. This position is with good reason given to it; for, it cannot be denied, that most of the incitements to indulge in acts

and in thoughts which would utterly blast and uproot chastity from our hearts, have their origin in the body. As we have already explained, the more robust and the better the condition of the body is, the more keenly it is alive to that which will gratify its instincts, and the more impetuous is its longing for that which we falsely imagine will appease its hunger. Therefore, let what has already been said, suffice to prove the absolute necessity for keeping in due subordination these fleshly instincts of our fallen nature; and we may here once again repeat that a better means, or one more easy of application, or more effectual in its results, cannot be devised for this purpose than is a rigorous treatment of the body, for the simple reason that pain, or even a Spartan simplicity of living, is a healthy corrective of that prurient longing for carnal pleasure which is the unhappy inheritance of our fallen nature. This has been in all ages well understood both by Sage and by Saint, and, therefore, they had the courage and the heroic spirit to rise superior to bodily pain, from which this effeminate age shrinks with unfeigned horror. The Apostle chastised the body which Satan buffeted, and he chastised it, we may be sure, with no light or sparing hand, for he did all things with the earnestness and the thoroughness stamped upon every line of his character. Our own holy Father St. Benedict, animated with a like spirit, was no less severe with his flesh when it rebelled against the light of his reason. On one occasion, when it threatened to overcome the fixed resolve of his soul, he rushed forth from the cave in which he was living in the practice of the most rigorous penance, and plunging into a brake of thorns and briars, rolled about till he had quenched the flame of concupiscence with his own blood. St. Jerome, amid the horrors of the desert, and at a time when his withered body was well-nigh dried up with the fierce ardour with which he raged against it, nevertheless felt the sting of the flesh urging him on to the gratification of its lusts. He did not yield to its solicitings. He passed the long hours of the night striking his breast with a

fragment of rock, and picturing before his affrighted soul the dread pageantry of the great and terrible judgment-day. To conquer a similar rebellion in his members, St. Francis of Assisi lay down in the snow till the fierce heat in his blood was cooled by the sharp frost of the winter's night. What these Saints have done to preserve their chastity, men in our own day still continue to do; and their noble resolve to be true to God puts into their hands the cruel scourge, and robs their eyes of sleep, and tames the domestic foe by rigorous fasting, and by all those holy austerities which cast forth the devil with wondrous potency.

Bodily mortification must be accompanied by another natural means which is always prescribed by spiritual physicians as an excellent preservative of chastity. This is the avoiding of idleness. A man if he wishes to be virtuous must work with his brain or with his hands. If we seek for the reason, we shall find that this necessity arises from the very constitution of our soul and of our body. Both are made to be active; the mind to think, the body to labour. When they either are withheld from their proper objects, or are allowed to rest in a sort of torpid state, the body, first of all, is filled with a superabundance of all kinds of vicious humours which labour would have enabled it to throw off; the mind, which through the bodily frame is acted upon by these humours, is then harassed by all kinds of idle, vicious thoughts, and the devil, taking advantage of their presence, uses all his art to shape them into pictures before the imagination. The result of the combination of these predisposing causes to evil, is obvious. Temptations crowd in upon the soul thick as birds of prey upon a dead carcase, and evil deeds are done which would never have had any existence had the great, the general law of labour been obeyed, and the faculties of the mind been engaged in useful thought, or the members of the body in equally useful labour. When they are withheld from activity, they are like a ship which is hauled up upon the beach out of its element; or water which is not suffered

to flow; or steel which is not used. The ship becomes unsound; the water corrupts and becomes offensive; the steel grows rusty. So with the soul which is given over to idleness; it becomes an unseaworthy vessel, unfit to meet the storm of temptation, and destined to perish, swallowed up in the foaming sea of passion which rages around it; a loathsome stagnant pool, generating hideous creeping things hateful to God and to man; a dulled, darkened metal, encrusted with rust and incapable of reflecting the image of God.

Therefore it is that both the Sacred Scriptures, and the men of wide experience in the treatment of souls, are equally earnest in their exhortations to us to shun idleness. The Wise Man regards it as the teacher of much mischief.[1] To its baneful influence the Prophet Ezechiel attributes the overthrow of Sodom, upon which Almighty God rained down a flood of fire.[2] St. Bernard calls it a sink of iniquity; and our holy Father St. Benedict, speaking of it, says: 'Idleness is an enemy of the soul. Therefore, the Brethren ought to be employed at certain times in labouring with their hands, and at other fixed times in holy reading.'[3] The Apostle, though free to live at the expense of his converts, yet did not do so; not only to be in greater liberty, but to give them an example which they might follow.[4] In fact, he considered that if anyone would not work, he was not entitled to eat his daily bread: 'If any man will not work, neither let him eat.'[5] It is manifest, therefore, that chastity cannot long subsist in the soul of an idle man. He must be up and doing, otherwise his chastity will be lost. For, as the Fathers say: 'A busy man has but one devil to tempt him; but an idle man is tempted not only by the devil, but by himself.'

Not only, then, idleness must be shunned as inviting the attack of the unclean devil, but all other things which may be an occasion of leading us into sins against that beautiful virtue which we have vowed to God. To shun these

[1] Ecclus. xxxiii. 29. [2] Ezech. xvi. 49. [3] Reg., Cap. xlviii.
[4] 2 Thess. iii. 8. [5] *Ibid.* iii. 10.

occasions is the last of the natural means for guarding the vow of chastity. The great Massillon, instructing his Clergy on this particular means, says: 'We have within us the same fund of weakness that other men have, but we have not the same resources to meet and to counteract its influence. Our State, far from giving us confidence, ought rather to increase our fear, because it increases our danger. The obligation of continence which it imposes upon us provokes and stirs up our passions. Deprived, by the holiness of our profession, of the remedy which serves as an antidote for the rest of men, we are exposed to the fury of our passions, and we run the risk of perishing by them.'[1] These few words are amply sufficient to show us the dangers bristling in the path of those who have taken upon themselves the yoke of chastity. Therefore, as their danger is increased by what they have done, so also should be the vigilance and the precaution necessary to ward off the evil threatening them. They should guard their chastity as men guard inflammable materials from the peril of fire. With what cautious care do they hedge round powder and other explosives! How careful are they in handling them, or in moving them from place to place! They fear even the shadow of danger, and tremble if but for a single instant it darkens their path. Now, are the passions within us less inflammable, less easy to ignite, to break forth and to cause frightful ruin and loss of the most precious of our possessions? Do we not know instances of men of great virtue, men of blameless lives, men who have passed the greater part of their days in the practice of piety, falling into vices of the grossest kind? What has been the cause? Carelessness in avoiding danger! They began to confide in their strength; to despise those wise precautions which they used to deem so necessary; to venture upon certain liberties which gradually blunted the keen edge of their conscience. Little by little, gradually, almost imperceptibly, they drew nigh to the fire, and before they were well aware of it, there shot forth from it a spark which enveloped them in a

[1] Sermon aux Clercs: Sur la manière de se conduire dans le monde.

disastrous conflagration. They loved the danger, and they perished in it.

Flee, therefore, from it, under whatever guise it may present itself to you, and you will never lose your chastity. Sometimes the danger lies under the witching style and the honeyed words of cleverly-written books; sometimes in the beauty of form which is the creation of artistic skill; sometimes in the charm and the wit of cultured society. But no matter how it may cover and strive to hide from view the deadly steel which it wishes to plunge into your heart, learn to detect it, and to flee away from it, or you will be fascinated as a bird is by the glitter of the serpent's eyes.

But if there is one thing more than any other which spiritual writers mark out as specially deceitful and dangerous, it is a love for the society of women. Their unvarying advice on this subject is: 'Avoid this kind of company, unless either an indispensable necessity, or the duties of your office compel you to frequent it, and even so beware.' Hear the answer which St. Ambrose gives to that plausible excuse, so frequently suggested by the devil to calm the anguish of a conscience troubled by exposure to peril, to wit, that the affection which we entertain for others is altogether spiritual: 'Spiritual love easily degenerates into sensual love. At first it is like an exquisite wine, but as Isaias says, it often happens that with it we mingle water which destroys its worth; in itself it is like a precious balsam which is spoiled by adding common liquors to it. How many are there who, under the guise of piety, have entered upon friendships and have imagined that their intercourse with their friends had reference to the service of God and to the salvation of souls! Of a truth, it may be that, in the beginning, they had no other object in view; but in course of time, this affection which was so pure, so holy, degenerated little by little, and from being all spiritual became all sensual.'[1] Hence, there is no safety but in flight from everything that might entangle our feet in the meshes of sin. Objects and

[1] De Profectu Relig., Lib. II. Cap. 27.

persons that are of this nature must be shunned as if they were plague-stricken; if we meet with, or if we are brought in contact with them, we must shake them off as if they were live coals of fire; then we shall never have to lament over the loss of our virtue, or over the violation of the troth which before the altar of God we plighted to Jesus Christ.

Besides shunning occasions of sin, fleeing from idleness, and mortifying the body, which acts are the three natural means for preserving chastity, there are others which are spiritual, and which must also be made use of, or else our efforts will be in vain. For, although these natural means stand as a formidable bulwark before our virtue, yet unless they are joined with those which are spiritual, they are a bulwark behind which there is no garrison to repel an assault. These spiritual means are prayer, humility, the Sacraments, and the abiding consciousness of the ever-present eye of God.

We put prayer first, because it is the ordinary means by which we obtain the gifts and the graces of God; because it is recommended to us by Our divine Lord as the key which unlocks His treasure-house; and because it puts the wealth of His kingdom at our disposal. Now, the jewel which He specially delights to see glittering upon the brow of His creatures is chastity, whether it is the chastity of the married life, or the chastity of the celibate life passed in the world or in the cloister. As it does not depend upon the will of man whether this glory shall shed its lustre upon his soul, but upon the liberality of God Whose gift it is,[1] it will follow that it must be sought for by lowly prayer and by tears of earnest longing.[2] Of this there can be no doubt. The Wisest of Men was so thoroughly convinced of it that he says: 'As I knew that I could not be continent unless God gave it, I went to the Lord and besought Him with my whole heart.'[3] Sad experience taught King David the same lesson, and hence his humble petition to the Giver of all good gifts: 'Create a clean heart in me, O God.'[4] In another Psalm he says:

[1] St. Augustine. Epist. 89. [2] *Idem.* Epist. 143, ad Julianam
[3] Wisd. viii. 21. [4] Ps. l. 12.

'Let my heart be undefiled in Thy justifications, that I may not be confounded.'[1] When the great Apostle felt the furious attack of the devil upon the chastity which he prized so highly, he betook himself to prayer, that he might be able to preserve it intact, and thrice besought the Lord that the hellish storm might cease, from which he dreaded the shipwreck of his virtue.'[2] The same means was as a keen blade in the hands of the Angelic Doctor, and with it he vanquished once and for ever the demon of uncleanness, sent to shake his fixed resolve to lead a life of chastity. For, when he had fallen upon his knees in prayer, after having driven from his presence with a flaming brand the wretched creature who had dared to tempt him, he saw in vision an Angel of God descend from heaven and gird his loins with a mystic girdle which ever after held in subjection the rebellious spirit of the flesh. So was it also with the glorious St. Cecilia who had vowed her chastity to God. While uttering the prayer of the Psalmist and beseeching God to keep her heart undefiled, she received a special sign from God that He had granted the gift which she craved; and the presence of a bright Angel by her side, as the guardian of her purity, made evident both the power there is in prayer to win this favour from God, and the esteem in which He holds this most beautiful and delicate virtue.

To this means, then, everyone must have recourse who wishes to obtain or to preserve chastity. He must pray for it; and that prayer must be made not once or twice, but always. Not a day or an hour should pass by without being marked by the uprising of this petition from his heart. His lips should ever be repeating the words of David: 'Create a clean heart in me, O God.' He should use them to adorn his soul with this virtue; to build up around it a strong rampart, and when the hour of trial comes, and the powers of darkness do their utmost to burst through the defences, to spoil and waste the temple of God, they should break from his heart like the strong

[1] Ps. cxviii. 80. [2] 2 Cor. xii. 8.

cry which pierces the clouds and calls down the might of the Lord to stand by our side and save us from harm. If he do this, if he pray earnestly, perseveringly and humbly, he will never be moved. His chastity will never be tarnished by the filth of hell. It will be preserved intact till it be crowned by the great Master in the kingdom of heaven.

Prayer must be accompanied by humility, otherwise it will fall to the ground; for, God resists the proud and gives His grace only to the humble. Humility, therefore, is the next supernatural means both for obtaining and for guarding chastity. In fact, we may say that prayer to God is an outcome of humility, inasmuch as humility, being a thorough knowledge of self, and a mistrust of self, in consequence of that knowledge, an appeal for aid to a superior power is at once natural and logical. This self-knowledge, then, which lowers us in our own esteem, and makes us see our own nothingness, is one of the chief safeguards of chastity, not merely because it makes us rely upon the superior strength of God and appeal to Him for aid, but because it makes us feel that we are powerless to resist the special evil which assails this angelic virtue. It puts clearly before our eyes a few unmistakable facts, the first of which is, that chastity is not a virtue which our nature embraces and loves in consequence of the nobility of our being and of some inborn drawing towards it, such as we feel for self-indulgence. In the next place, it makes us understand not only that, on the part of our nature, there is no drawing towards chastity, but that there is even a repulsion to it and a very strong attraction in quite an opposite direction. Furthermore, that even when we have been illuminated by divine light and strengthened by grace from on high, to see and to love this angelic virtue, humility makes us feel how feeble, how wavering, and how nerveless is our will, the moment that the choice between self-gratification and the abstinence of chastity is given to us. The result, therefore, of such a conviction as that forced upon us by humility, is a great mistrust of self and a consciousness that we are carrying one of God's most

precious jewels in an earthen vessel, upon a narrow and slippery path, on which a false or an incautious step may bring about our fall and the loss of what is of such priceless value.

Thus it is that humility becomes a protecting shield to chastity. For, the humble man, knowing his own weakness, his inclination to evil, and the fascination which evil exercises over his imagination and his will, always acts as a wary traveller making his way through some mountain-pass that is infested by thieves. His eye carefully scans every crag and boulder; his ear is keenly alive to the faintest sound; his hand is on his weapon; and he is ready, on the first intimation of danger, to take up a position of defence from which he may safely contend against his foes. Hence, the humble man never encounters a danger of sin, unless either duty or necessity forces him to confront it, on which occasion he may rationally count upon the aid of God. He does not listen to what is suggestive of evil. He does not look at what is, or at what may be, a source of peril. He is armed at all points with caution and foresight. He neglects nothing, and he is, therefore, well fenced against all the external enemies who aim at plucking chastity out of his heart. He has, consequently, to contend only with his internal foe, and victory over him is easy when those who abet and aid his rebellion are either held in check or defeated. Therefore, the study and the practice of humility must be joined with earnest prayer, in order to secure the jewel of chastity from being clutched and carried off by our ever-vigilant and unwearied enemies.

If we remember that chastity which we wish to defend from the rage of these enemies, and prayer by which we ask it of God, and humility which enables us to protect it from the rapacity of the devils, are graces of God, and, moreover, if we bear in mind that the Sacraments were instituted by God as channels to convey grace to our souls, it will be evident that these Sacraments are the third powerful means for protecting our chastity from the

onslaught of our foes. Two, out of the seven Sacraments, seem to have been specially designed by God for the defence of chastity. These are Penance and the Holy Eucharist. In Penance we have, first, a great exercise of humility, when we lay bare before the eyes of a fellow-man all the weaknesses, the littlenesses, the meannesses, and the miseries of our fallen state. Then we share in the sympathy and the guidance of one who is compassed with infirmity as we ourselves are, and who consequently, is able to feel compassion for the erring and the sinful. Lastly, we have applied to our soul the cleansing and healing waters of Christ's most precious blood, by which the filth and the corruption of sin are purged from them, the deep wounds inflicted by self-indulgence healed, and their ugly scars smoothed away. When we have been thus once again admitted to favour with God, another inestimable privilege is granted to us in the Holy Eucharist, in which we receive the body and the blood, the soul and the divinity of Christ, true God and true Man. We drink of the source of chastity itself. We eat that virginal flesh which generates virginity. Hence, in Penance and in the Holy Eucharist, the man who has vowed to keep himself chaste has a means of defence which, if properly made use of, will protect him, as with the shield of the Most High, from all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Therefore, in order to keep our white robe free from spot or stain, we must have recourse to both these Sacraments. First, with respect to the Sacrament of Penance: if in the journey of life we are forced to walk in muddy ways, and the mire, from time to time, is splashed up upon our garments, we must have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance to wipe off the filth and utterly to obliterate the stain. But in order that this source of grace may do for us all that God would have it do, and all that He instituted it in order that it might do, we must make use of it, not simply to cleanse ourselves, but to receive both strength and guidance in our warfare against those who not only will pelt us with the mire of the world to stain our garments, but will endeavour

to cast us upon the earth and trample us beneath their feet. For this purpose it is necessary that we should be quite open with our divinely appointed guide, and suffer him to read our conscience as if he were reading a book. There should be no concealment with him; no glossing over of faults; no colouring with excuses. Our temptations should be explained to him; our inclinations made known; our weaknesses laid bare; and this for the simple reason that he sits in the tribunal of penance as guide, judge, and physician. Now, if he is to heal us of our spiritual disorders, and particularly if he is to heal us of this pestilent evil of impurity, he must know us as well as a physician knows his patient; for, then he will be able to prescribe for us suitable remedies. There is, however, a great disinclination to make known anything more than is absolutely required by the strict law of the Church; and this disinclination, no doubt, arises from the cunning of the devil, who particularly desires to remain concealed, in order that he may the more easily effect our ruin. Prudence and self-interest, therefore, should urge us to lay bare the maladies of our conscience before our judge, physician, and guide; then, not only we shall be cleansed from every blemish which mars the peerless beauty of our soul, but we shall be strengthened against the attacks of our enemies, and taught how to discover and to avoid the cunningly contrived snares which they lay in order to entrap us and rob us of our virtue.

Next, with respect to the Holy Eucharist: the frequent use of Penance will always keep our chastity free from stain, and consequently will make us, in some degree, less unworthy to receive the Blessed Sacrament. This mystery of love is, perhaps, the most infallible defence against all that can wound chastity, and also the surest and most efficacious preservative of its beauty. For, just consider what it is that we do when we approach the Holy Table, and there partake of the divine bread which is given us to eat. We take into our hearts the Holy of Holies. We receive Purity Itself. The strong, living God becomes our food—

God, between Whom and uncleanness there is an enmity that is infinite and absolute. His flesh is the nutriment of our sinful flesh; His blood allays the fierce heat of our sinful blood. Can there be, then, any draught so admirably calculated to assuage the feverish thirst for sinful pleasure which consumes us? Can there be any remedy which will so effectually purge out the corruption of our hearts? Therefore, let us go with eagerness and with confidence to the Holy Table and take thence the food of Angels. It is given, not as a recompense of virtue, but as a means to procure it, by sustaining and augmenting the virtue which we already possess. If a man be weak, it will strengthen him. If he be strong and vigorous, it will give him still more strength and make him still more solidly virtuous. It will enable him to advance and to ascend in the ways of the spirit. It will lead him, at last, to that perfection which is possible here below, and will aid him to win his crown and to say to his Lord: 'I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.'

Lastly, for the preservation of chastity, there is one other means which ought to be made use of, especially by those who either are beginning to walk in the strait way of chastity, or are experiencing the first onslaughts which the devil makes upon their virtue. This is the constant remembrance of the presence of God. He is everywhere by His essence, and in Him as the Apostle says, we live, we move, and we have our being. He upholds and supports us. To our eye, He gives its power of vision; to our hand, its cunning. Our brain thinks, our heart beats, the elements of our bodily frame hold together, because He is with us, and is aiding and upholding us. He is, therefore, a witness of all that we either think or do. There is no portion of our being curtained off and hidden away from His sight. His eye is ever upon us. It slumbers not, it sleeps not. It looks into the secret springs of our acts and of our thoughts, which springs self-love so deftly covers over and hides from even ourselves. Of all this the Prophet was conscious when he said: 'Whither shall I go from Thy

Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take wing early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.' [1]

What an effect, then, must this awe-inspiring thought have had upon his daily life! What a marvellous hold will it have upon our own, if we can but realise this fact,—for a fact it is, as indubitable as any that stares us in the face from out the common, everyday world in which we are struggling and battling for our daily bread. It will make us feel that, with respect to God, we can have no privacy, no solitude; no, not even for our thoughts, or for the swift resolves of the mind, or for the fancies which flit athwart our imagination. He sees all. He sees, and says nothing. He sees both our outward and our inward acts. Can there be any motive more powerful than this knowledge to make us keep unsullied the chastity of our hearts? What modesty marks the external behaviour of him who is in the presence of a venerable and holy man! What decorum does the eye of such a one enforce! Shall not the remembrance of God's all-holy presence hold us in so great awe as to keep our thoughts as pure, and our acts as modest? The Saints can think of nothing better to protect the virtue of chastity; and for this reason they advise those who wish to preserve it unstained, constantly to remember that they are under the unsleeping eye of God; that they are never alone; that no darkness is thick enough to baffle the penetration of His searching glance; no solitude too remote to be reached; and, therefore, that every foul imagination is pictured before the eye of God; that every evil deed is done under the noonday brightness of His presence; that every filthy thought is laid bare before His infinite holiness! How careful will be the man who bears in mind these facts, to set his foot upon the first spark that is capable of lighting up the fire of concupiscence! How

[1] Ps. cxxxviii. 10.

guarded will he be in his looks; how mortified in his body; how abhorrent of evil words; how cautious in shunning occasions; how strenuous in repulsing the unclean devil; how distrustful of self; how confident in the help of God! His reward will be a chastity of soul and of body, so dazzlingly bright as to be little inferior to the splendour of holiness which is the glory and the crown of the Angels who ever stand in the awful presence of God.

Therefore, let him who here below wishes to be crowned with the beauty of chastity and to be raised hereafter to a throne of glory, firmly resolve to make use of the means which God has put at his disposal for its attainment. Like all rewards, it must be won by contest, by struggle, by the sacrifice of self. It is given only to those who are willing to tame their rebellious flesh by Christian mortification; who are ready so to occupy themselves with labour as to leave the internal enemy of chastity no time to plot with the unclean devil for their destruction; who will deny themselves the excitement of risking their salvation by going into danger. But besides doing all this, those who wish to be chaste must also seek supernatural aid from God, by prayer, by deep humility of soul, by frequent use of Penance which washes away all stains, by reception of the Holy Eucharist which imparts to the human soul the strength of God Himself, and, lastly, by a vivid realisation of the presence of God. Once again we repeat it, to those who take the means to keep themselves chaste, God will not be wanting. Only let them help themselves by doing all that in them lies to keep that treasure untouched, and God will aid them; for, He helps those who first try to help themselves.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### *OF THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE IN GENERAL.*

St. Paul was not making use of a mere rhetorical flourish when he bade the Ephesians, 'imitate God as most dear children.'[1] He spoke with all the sober caution of strict theological truth. For, although they could not with their eyes of flesh look upon Him, inasmuch as no man hath ever seen God and lived, yet they could in this way look upon Jesus Christ and imitate Him just as they could imitate any model which might be put before them. Now, as we know so well and believe so firmly, he who looks upon Christ, sees God, and therefore, by imitating Our divine Lord he is imitating God. There are many things, however, in which it is impossible for us to follow the example of Christ. We cannot work the miracles which He wrought, or speak with the persuasive power wherewith He spoke, or mould the minds of men to do our will as He was able to mould them, or fast, or pray, or live so poor as He did. But there is one great point in which it is in the power of us all to follow and to imitate Him, and that is in the great purpose for which He came into the world. We can be obedient as He was. We can give up our will, as He gave up His: 'I came, not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me.'[2]

As it is for this purpose that we take upon ourselves the yoke of the Religious Life, it will be profitable for us to inquire how far the vow of obedience obliges us to go in this renunciation of our will; and whether we sin, and how grievously we sin, if we refuse to accomplish the sacrifice which we have promised to make.

[1] Ephes. v. 1. See Billuart, De Statu Relig., Art. vi., vii.

[2] St. John vi. 38.

In the first place, then, we may say, in a general sort of way, that the vow of obedience obliges all who take it, to obey the precept or command of their lawful Superior, in those things which pertain either directly or indirectly to the observance of the vows, the Rule, and the Constitutions. From the generality of these terms, in which the extent of the jurisdiction of the vow of obedience is determined, the range of its power seems to be very extensive, and to embrace well-nigh every precept which it may please a Superior to impose. But the limits within which his power to command, in virtue of the vow, is confined, are in reality very narrow indeed. He cannot issue any command which may seem good to him, and require his subjects to obey it under penalty of violating the solemn engagement of their vow. Therefore, because this power is limited, it will follow that, not all the commands of a Superior are enjoined in virtue of the vow; and that, many acts of disobedience to the Rule and to the Constitutions, are not infringements of the vow. The vow, in fact, is broken only when the Superior truly commands and intends to oblige his subjects to observe his commands in virtue of the vow of obedience which they have made.

But when does a Superior issue his precepts in this way? Then, and then only, when his mandate is couched in such terms as: 'I command under formal precept; in virtue of the Holy Spirit; in virtue of holy obedience, or the like.' Every precept given in these or in similar terms, is binding upon the conscience of inferiors under the penalty of mortal sin in grave matters, and under the penalty of venial sin in matters of little moment—unless the command is transgressed out of contempt—concerning which we will speak more at large farther on. Therefore, the Superior, is never supposed to bind his subjects, under the grave penalty of mortal sin, to do what he wishes, unless one of these recognised formulas is employed. This will hold good when he issues an order about some matter of even grave importance. In this latter case, he may, if he pleases, attach to his order the penalty of venial

sin, which penalty will usually be known by such expressions as: 'I command; I order;' because these phrases cannot be construed to mean, 'I advise,' or 'I exhort,' and also because religious discipline requires subjects to obey not only the extreme commands of Superiors, but all legitimate commands of whatever nature they may be.

Furthermore, it must be noticed that the duty of obedience is not to be paid indiscriminately, to any Superior, but only to a legitimate or lawfully constituted Superior. Hence, no one, unless invested with proper jurisdiction, can claim obedience to his orders or to his wishes. But once a Superior is vested with the right to command, then there exists, on the part of those subject to his sway, a corresponding duty to yield him obedience. Yet the obedience to be given is not, necessarily, an unqualified obedience. It is limited to those commands the object of which is the observance of the vows, the Rule, and the Constitutions of the Order of which the Religious has become a member. The reason of this restriction is that, in making his profession, he has not vowed an absolute obedience, but an obedience defined and limited by the Rule of the Institute which he has embraced. That Institute puts into the hands of the Superiors who administer its laws, a definite range of jurisdiction and a limited power; and beyond the lines thus marked out, the subject is not called upon to extend his submission. It will follow from this that each Religious Order has its own standard of obedience; and that the obedience exacted in one has a wider range than that required in another. One will look for more, another will be content with less. Another consequence which follows from what we have said is that, if any Superior were to command anything manifestly against the Rule or the Constitutions of his Order, his subjects would not be obliged to obey him in that particular instance. Thus, for example, our own Congregation is established for the English Mission and not for the evangelization of foreign countries; therefore, if a Superior should order any of us to go to Africa, or to China, or to America, we should

not be obliged to obey. So, also, would it be with a Dominican if he were ordered to eat flesh meat. But if his Superior has power to dispense, and if there is a just cause for so doing, the subject is bound to obey, because the Superior is exercising his legitimate authority. If an inferior need not obey his Superior, when the latter commands anything against the ordinances of the Rule, it will be obvious that he is not bound to obey, and that he *must* not obey if the Superior should order what is against the Law of God. But if the command issued is only doubtfully illicit, the subject must solve his doubt and obey. He may easily do this and act with a safe conscience, by some such process of reasoning as the following: 'My Superior is a grave, thoughtful, and conscientious man; therefore, it is unlikely that he would command anything unlawful; hence, what seems to me doubtful is very probably quite right and just, and consequently it may with a safe conscience, be done by me.' Again; no one is obliged to obey the mandate of a Superior who commands more than the Rule itself requires. Hence, in Orders which permit the use of flesh meat, no Superior need be obeyed who commands long abstinence, or who orders the Religious to go barefoot when the Rule enjoins the use of shoes and stockings.

But when a Superior orders anything which either directly or indirectly pertains to the Rule, the inferior must obey at once. By what directly pertains to the Rule, we mean all that is expressly contained in it; and by what indirectly pertains to it, we mean all that is either necessary or useful for its observance. Of this latter kind are those ordinances which require Religious mutually to tend and serve one another; also the penalties to be inflicted for the non-observance of regulations, and the measures necessary for preserving or for restoring regular observance. All these and the like, inasmuch as they pertain in an indirect sort of way to the Rule, fall under the vow of obedience, and, therefore, they may be ordered by a Superior, and when ordered they must be obeyed; and this for the simple reason that he who explicitly promises to observe

what is explicitly contained in the Rule, by that very fact implicitly promises to do all that is useful and necessary for its observance.

From these few remarks we have learnt the limits within which our obedience is confined, and from them it is evident that the vow is never transgressed unless that obedience is refused to a real precept or to a command which is usually known by the formula 'in virtue of obedience.' Moreover, the person who issues such a command must be a lawfully constituted Superior, and he must exercise his authority only in such matters as fall, either directly or indirectly, within the statutes of the Rule or of the Constitutions.

We are now, therefore, in possession of sufficient data to examine and to determine whether a Religious sins, and how grievously he sins, by refusing to submit to the Rule or the Constitutions of his Order.

There can be no doubt, first of all, that a Religious sometimes sins by not obeying the Constitutions and the Rule of the Institute which he has embraced. For, the Church or the Bishop, by the fact of approval, gives to every founder of a Religious Congregation or of an Order, the right and the power to draw up a code of laws, and to impose those laws upon all who are willing to enter the Community for which this legislation is made. It is for this reason that obedience is due to these enactments, since the power is of God, and by resisting it, the ordinance of God is opposed, as St. Paul teaches.[1] A further reason is that among the members of the society thus constituted and approved of by the Church or by the Bishop, the Superior holds the place of a father, and he is vested with parental authority. Hence he is able, within the limits of the Rule drawn up for his and for their guidance, to exact obedience from those who are members of his household; and that, too, independently of any vow, and from the mere fact that they belong to his Religious family. It will follow, therefore, both from having power in his hands to impose a law, and from being the head of a Religious family, that the

[1] Rom. xiii. 2.

Superior is able to enforce obedience under penalty of sin; and further, that the gravity of the penalty under which he requires this obedience will depend upon the laws which the Rule empowers him to administer. Hence it will happen that, by transgressing the Constitutions or the Rule, a Religious will sometimes not sin at all, or he will sin either venially or mortally, according to the nature of the particular precept against which he offends. This will be clearer still if we bear in mind that, in entering an Order, the Religious does not vow to observe *all* that is contained in the Rule, but only to live a regular life *according to* the prescriptions of the Rule. But as the Rule, according to which he has vowed to live, does not prescribe everything under the penalty of mortal sin, but some things under the penalty of venial sin, such as external observances, and others under the penalty of no fault whatever, but only under the obligation of accepting the punishment inflicted for such transgressions, it will follow that he will sin mortally, only when he breaks commands imposed under that grave penalty; venially, when he offends against that which from Rule or from the words of the Superior, he knows to be an express command intended by the Superior to be binding in conscience; and oftentimes he will commit no fault at all, because he breaks through a penal law.

A further confirmation of this conclusion may be had from the fact of the various ways in which Religious Orders vow to observe their Rule. Some of these promise to *keep* the Rule; others, with greater caution, to live *according* to the Rule; and others, again, with greater caution still, to *obey* according to the Rule. But, of even those who vow to keep the Rule, it has been defined that their trangression of what they have thus so solemnly promised to observe is mortal, or is venial, or is no fault at all, according as the matters contained in the Rule which they transgress are rigorous precepts binding under penalty of mortal sin; or common statutes binding under venial sin; or only counsel or advice which does not oblige under any penalty. With greater reason, therefore, are those persons exempt

from grave sins who have vowed to live or to obey only *according* to the Rule. If this were not the case, and if all the statutes and the constitutions of a Rule were binding under penalty of mortal sin, the yoke of Religious Life, which Our Lord said 'is sweet and light,' would be bitter and intolerable; and instead of being a secure and easy way to eternal happiness, would be full of the deadly peril of eternal damnation. With the exception, then, of the vows, and of one or two points which vary in different Orders, no other laws bind under penalty of grave sin.

With respect to minor regulations, it depends upon the will of the Superior whether they are under penalty of venial fault or not, and that fact each Religious body is best able to determine for itself. In very many, the Rules do not bind the conscience under penalty of sin. But though the transgressor of these and of other statutes may be free from fault on this count, yet most spiritual writers would bring him in guilty of venial fault upon three other counts. First, they maintain that all such breaches of regular discipline may be venial sins, by reason of negligence on the part of him who offends against it; and they consider his offence to be the effect of negligence, when without any reasonable cause or honest motive, he does not comply with some statute or law which calls for his obedience. For, a law or a statute is said to be neglected when without a reasonable cause he who ought to comply with its requirements omits to do so. Now, to act thus, even in indifferent matters, is, on the admission of sound theologians, a venial sin; and, therefore, he who through negligence disobeys or transgresses some law or some statute of his Order, is guilty of venial sin, even though that law or that statute, does not bind him under that penalty. But if there should happen to be any reasonable cause for setting aside a rule or a statute, not only there is no sin in the act, but there is even some virtue in not observing what it orders; because in indifferent matters, it is a virtue to act with an honest motive. Nevertheless, although the law or the rule thus transgressed may not be binding under penalty of sin, yet

it may, notwithstanding, be binding under penalty of some slight punishment to which the offender is bound to submit.

On hearing this, there will at once present itself a difficulty which calls for solution. How, it may be asked, can anyone be obliged to undergo punishment for an act in which he has not only not sinned, but for which he has even merited a reward? Punishment, as we all know so well, is inflicted only for a fault; there ought, consequently, to be no punishment for that in which there has been no fault. This apparent incongruity, or injustice, will be explained satisfactorily enough if we bear in mind that punishment for such a breach of discipline or of Rule as that which we are considering is not, by any means, intended to chastise the fault committed, since no such fault exists. It is merely a penalty to which a Religious spontaneously agrees to submit, by the simple fact of accepting the legislation of the Rule which he undertakes to observe; and, therefore, that penalty may be incurred by an act or by an omission which is in itself virtuous. For, a Religious is just in the position of a man who has signed a contract which, among other matters, allows him to do or to omit certain acts, on condition that for every omission he shall pay a fine. If the person so circumstanced, for some reasonable or honest end, omits the specified act, he will by that omission perform a virtuous and meritorious action; nevertheless, because of his agreement he is bound to undergo the prescribed penalty. For precisely the same reason a Religious may actually perform a virtuous and meritorious act by the transgression of some rule, and yet he may be bound to submit to the penalty assigned for such a transgression. For, between him and the Order of which he is a member, there is a contract to keep the Rule and the Constitutions. If he does not keep to the agreement, he is free from fault; but he is bound to undergo the penalty, because of the contract which he has made.

Again; besides being guilty of a venial sin, on account

of his negligence, a Religious, by not observing rules which do not bind under pain of sin, may nevertheless for another reason incur the guilt of sin; that is, for failing through a motive of concupiscence to do what the Rule prescribes. By this is understood a certain *deordination* of will, whereby any object is desired more vehemently than right reason allows. To do this is a venial fault. Thus a Religious would sin in this way if his Rule forbade him to eat between meals, and he, out of sensuality, or out of a too great desire of food, were to violate the fast thus enjoined; or, again, if he were to break the silence prescribed at certain times and in certain places, in order to satisfy a vain curiosity which makes him eager to learn some piece of news about which he is particularly anxious. Lastly, a Religious may sin by breaking rules which do not bind under pain of sin, if he does this out of contempt. A person sins by *contempt*, when it is his *will* that refuses to be subject to the ordinance of the Law, and in consequence of this proceeds to act against it. It is, in fact, a rebellion against authority and Law as such, and is a comparatively rare offence. For, most men are led to offend against Law and order through anger, self-interest, sluggishness, or some other motive, and not through contempt of the *principle* of authority. If anyone were to refuse to submit to any law or to any Superior whatever, because he hated the *principle* of authority, his refusal would be what is called perfect contempt, and he would be guilty of a mortal sin, inasmuch as he would wish to destroy one of God's ordinances, which is as necessary for the moral world as the law of cohesion is for the material creation around us. But if the contempt with which anyone is actuated is not for all authority whatever but simply for this or for that particular manifestation of it, it is said to be imperfect. When a refusal to obey is the result of this species of contempt, it is a grave sin in grave matters, and a light sin in matters of secondary importance.

With these principles before our minds, we may now

proceed to treat of the *virtue* of obedience, which is able to expand and to increase in the scale of perfection till it reaches that degree of heroism which makes the Religious man like his great Model Jesus Christ, Who for our sakes became obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### *OBEDIENCE THE ESSENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.*

It will be evident, we think, from what we have said, that the obedience vowed in Religion is not a blind surrender of our soul and of our body to the will of another. This is what the enemies of the Church represent it to be, and over it they lament with much stern sorrow, and reprobate it with an expenditure of righteous indignation which might well be kept for objects more deserving of it. For, obedience, besides being limited by a Rule and accurately determined by Constitutions which rest upon the Gospel as their basis, is rendered even more voluntary and enlightened than it could otherwise possibly be, by means of that wise discipline which insists upon each candidate who presents himself to a Religious Order being thoroughly well acquainted with the conditions of the contract which he desires to make. 'An easy entrance,' says our holy Father St. Benedict, 'is not to be granted to one who cometh newly to Religious Life, but, as the Apostle saith: "Try the spirits, whether they be of God." He is not even to be admitted into the monastery till he has shown his sincerity by patiently bearing with the difficulty made about his entrance, and with the scant courtesy which is purposely dealt out to him. When admitted, he is subjected to one who puts before him all the austerity and the rigour of the Rule; narrowly watches him; severely reprehends his faults; and exercises him in works of obedience and of humility. After the second, the sixth, and the twelfth month of this severe trial, the whole Rule is read to him, with the words: "Behold the Law

under which thou desirest to fight; if thou canst observe it, enter; if thou canst not, freely depart." Then and then only is he suffered to make the vow of obedience, and from that time forth he is under the law of the Rule.'[1] Hence, the Religious is perfectly well acquainted beforehand with all that, in virtue of his vow, may be required of him. He knows that he cannot be called upon to do anything against the Law of God, and that the Order or the Superior to whom he subjects himself can command him only in accordance with the Rule which he knows so well, and with the Constitutions which so clearly interpret it.

Thus wisely protected from tyranny of any kind, he makes his vow of obedience; and in so doing he offers to God a more excellent sacrifice than if he merely vowed to live a life of poverty, or to observe perpetual chastity. For, the vow of poverty offers to God only our external goods; the vow of chastity, our body and its senses; but the vow of obedience consecrates and dedicates to the service of our Maker the will, which is all man.[2] In fact, it is by the vow of obedience that a man is constituted a Religious, and that Religious Orders are held together. Hence, it is the very essence of Religious Life. This proposition we will endeavour to demonstrate with all possible clearness.

There are two reasons why we say that obedience is the very essence of Religious Life: first, because it is that which makes a man a Religious and not a secular; and secondly, because the society of which he is a member would cease to exist if obedience were eliminated from it. In confirmation of the first reason, we may be allowed to remark that, in our investigations into the nature of anything, we speedily discover that there go to constitute its being some elements, the absence of which would not destroy our notion of it, for, it could easily be conceived to exist without them. Then again, we notice that there are others, the absence of which would utterly destroy our notion, and make it impossible that the object which we are considering should exist at all. Thus, in examining

[1] Regula Cap. xviii. [2] St Thomas II., ii., q. 186 a. 8.

the nature of man, we readily admit that he need not be beautiful, or robust, or learned, or witty, or wise; he may be conceived as wanting all these qualities, and yet be a man. For, these and many others of a similar kind are but accidental qualities, which are not absolutely necessary to constitute human nature. But there is a combination in him of two qualities, the absence of either of which would altogether destroy the notion conveyed by the term 'man,' and would make him either a brute beast, or a spirit. These are animality which he possesses in common with the brute creation, and rationality which he holds in common with the Angels. Rational animality, therefore, is that thing without which the notion 'man' would be incomplete. Therefore, we call it his *essence*, or that without which he would not be a man, but something else.

Now, that particular thing which makes a Religious what he is and not anything else, is his vow of obedience. Hence it is rightly called the essence of his existence in his character as a Religious. For, if we consider the matter, we shall see, from the definition which theologians give of him, that this is the case. They call him 'one who tends to perfection in a fixed state of life, approved by the Church, bound by the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.' Now, what is it that makes him a Religious? Is it the vow of chastity? No; for, he might live in the world bound by such a vow, and yet he would not be a Religious. Is it the vow of poverty? No; because poverty may be vowed and practised both by Christian and by pagan; it does not in itself constitute a man a Religious. Both the philosopher Crates and the cynic Diogenes despised wealth, and led lives of the strictest poverty. What, then, is it that makes a man a Religious? It is the vow of obedience. By it he offers to God a perfect holocaust of himself; and in it are contained the other two vows of poverty and chastity, while neither of them contains in itself the vow of obedience. Hence, obedience is that which marks off the Religious from all other men, and makes him what he is and not a secular. Therefore, it is rightly called the essence of the Religious Life.

This conclusion will imprint itself still more deeply upon our minds, if we take the trouble to examine and to see how obedience enters into, how it permeates through, and how it is so intimately intermingled with the actions of his life as to constitute the very texture out of which that life is woven, so that we may say: 'A life in Religion is a life of obedience.' Now, though this is true of all Religious Bodies that make profession of the three vows, yet it is specially true of Benedictines, whose characteristic feature is their obedience. A glance through the Holy Rule will serve to prove this. Almost in the opening sentence of that admirable piece of legislation which St. Benedict drew up for the instruction and the government of his disciples, he states in precise terms that he intends to make laws only for those who are willing to obey: 'My speech is, therefore, now directed to thee, who renouncing thy own will, dost take upon thee the strong and bright armour of obedience, to fight under the Lord Christ, our true King.[1] This, we may say, is his definition of one who calls himself a Benedictine. He must be an obedient man. The very Institute in which he enrols himself is dignified by the founder himself with no higher title than 'a school of obedience:' 'We are, therefore,' he says, 'about to institute a school of the service of God' (*schola servitii*)—that is, of obedience, in which we hope that nothing will be ordained too rigorous or burthensome.'[2] When he who has learnt the great lesson of obedience from the master of this heavenly science binds himself for life to observe the Rule which that master drew up for the guidance of Religious, it is odedience that he promises at the foot of the altar; because this vow contains in itself the other two—poverty, chastity, and obedience forming the not easily broken triple cord which for ever binds him to God. The document setting forth this solemn compact, he draws up with his own hand and deposits upon the altar, as a testimony against himself, and as a warning that, if he should withdraw his neck from the yoke, and his hand

[1] Regula, St. Bened., Prologus. [2] *Ibid.*, Prologus.

from the bonds of obedience, he will be condemned by God Whom he dares to mock.[1] Being by that vow constituted a Religious or one who is bound to obey, his ultimate end or object in life is, of course, to obtain the possession of God; but his proximate end, or that by which he is to reach perfection, is obedience. Obedience, then, in all its perfection, is the end at which he aims.

This is explained in very few words by St. Benedict, when he calls upon his disciple to 'hearken to the precepts of the Master, and to incline the ear of his heart, willingly to hear and effectually to accomplish the admonitions of his loving Father, that by the *labour of obedience* he may return to Him, from Whom he departed by the sloth of disobedience.[2] To accomplish this work, he proposes two means: a Rule to be followed, and an Abbot to interpret and to apply it. The Rule is supreme; for, speaking of it, he says: 'In all things let all follow the Rule as their master, and from it let no man rashly swerve.'[3] He considers that in a monastery the Abbot represents the person of Christ, inasmuch as he is called by Christ's name and title; for, the Apostle says: 'Ye have received the spirit of the adoption of children, in which we cry, Abba, Father.' Therefore, the Abbot is to teach, ordain, and command nothing but that which is conformable to the Law of the Lord.[4] It is for these reasons, then, namely—because the Abbot represents the person of Christ, and because in that capacity he must do naught and prescribe naught against the Divine Law, that our holy Father furthermore ordains that no one in the monastery shall follow his own will, and that no one shall presume, either within or without the monastery, to contend insolently with the Abbot.[5]

How complete, how entire that subjection and obedience are, will be evident from a few instances taken at random from the Rule. To the Abbot or Superior all are subject, both those who are simple Religious, and those who hold offices of honour and trust in the monastery. If they

[1] Regula, Cap. lviii. [2] *Ibid.*, Prologus. [3] Cap. iv.
[4] Cap. ii. [5] Cap. iii.

are raised to the priesthood, they are warned to beware of haughtiness and of pride, and never to presume to do anything unless it is ordered by the Abbot, for, that by reason of their dignity they are more subject to Rule even than before, inasmuch as they are bound to give good example. Hence, they are told not to forget the obedience due to the Rule.[1] Even should the Abbot, with the consent and the advice of his Community choose and appoint one of his subjects to hold the post of Provost or Prior, the person chosen is not released, by reason of his high office, from the jurisdiction of the Abbot. He, too, must still continue to live in all submission and obedience, for, it is said: 'Let the Provost do with reverence what shall be enjoined him by the Abbot, in no way going against his will or his ordinance; because the higher he is advanced above the rest, the more carefully ought he to observe all the precepts of the Rule.'[2] As for the other Religious who do not hold any office, their obedience to the Abbot and their dependence upon his will, differ in no respect from the dependence and the obedience of the officers or officials of the monastery. Without his leave 'they are not suffered to give, or to receive, or to hold as their own, anything whatever—book, tablets, pen, or anything at all.'[3] Without his permission, they cannot receive from their parents, or from anyone else, nor can they give to another, letters, or tokens, or any gifts whatever.[4] They are not allowed even to sing or to read in the church, or in the refectory, unless he shall appoint them to do so.[5] If they are sent forth from the monastery upon any errand, they must not presume to eat anything, even though invited to do so, unless they happen to have his order and sanction.[6] Finally, they must not pass beyond the enclosure of the monastery, or go anywhere, or do anything how trifling soever, without leave of the Abbot.[7]

The obedience due to him must be given also to the officers who, with him, share in the administration of the

[1] Cap. lxii. [2] Cap. lxv. [3] Cap. xxxiii. [4] Cap. liv.
[5] Cap. xlvii. [6] Cap. li. [7] Cap. lxvii.

monastery; and not to them only, but to one another also must this essential virtue be shown: 'The service of obedience,' he says, 'is not to be rendered to the Abbot only, but the brethren shall mutually obey one another, knowing that by this path of obedience they shall go unto God. Therefore, when the commands of the Abbot, or of the other Superiors constituted by him, have been first obeyed (to which commands we suffer no private orders to be preferred), the Juniors shall obey their Seniors, with all charity and diligence.'[1]

From these and from other passages of the Rule, it is evident that our holy Father, who was so deeply read in the spiritual lore of the great Saints of the Thebaïd, considered obedience to be the essence of Religious Life. Hence, every one who aspires to be a Religious must keep that fact constantly in view, and look upon himself as no Religious unless he holds that virtue in high esteem, and studies to make himself a man of obedience: 'Let him, therefore, prepare his heart and body to fight under the holy obedience of God's commands.[2] Let him hate self-will as his bitterest foe, because it ejects obedience from the heart.[3] Let him not be wedded to it, or seek to satisfy his desires, and he will carry out that saying of Our Lord: 'I came, not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me.'[4] Consequently, he must never seek to withdraw his neck from the yoke of the Rule, or to be his own master. The true Religious 'wills to have an Abbot over him, and to walk according to his command and direction.[5] Finally, so indispensable is this spirit for the Religious Life, that our great Founder, addressing Superiors, says: 'Let the Abbot always be mindful that, in the dread judgment of God he must give an account both of his doctrine and of the obedience of his disciples.'[6]

But if obedience, as we have seen, is essential to the notion of a Religious, and to the notion of Religious Life, it is no less essential, also to the notion of the body

[1] Cap. lxxi. [2] Regula, Prologus. [3] Cap. iv. Instrum., 59
[4] Cap. vii. [5] Cap. v. [6] Cap. ii.

corporate of which the Religious is a member. For, the Congregation or the Order to which he belongs is but an aggregate of units, each of which must be characterised by obedience, in order to be a Religious. Therefore, what is of the essence of the individual parts, must be of the essence also of the great whole constituted by their union. In fact, that union which knits together the individual units and makes of them a corporate body, is the result of obedience, and from this point of view obedience is essential to the very existence of a Religious Order. This is indubitable; for, that which holds a body corporate together and preserves it from dissolution, is essential to it. Now, no one will refuse to admit that this cementing power is the consequence of the due subordination of one member to another. But what is it that persuades men to submit to and to take their places in the corporation to which they belong, so that one shall be the head to plan and to devise ways and means for its subsistence, another shall be the eye to watch for danger and to take advantage of favourable opportunities, another the hands to work, another the feet, and so on? Is it not the principle of obedience? Most undoubtedly! The Divine Author of human society established this principle in the very infancy of the human race, when He made the mother of all the living subject to the first man. That family which sprang from their union was the model of all future societies in their wider development into tribes, and peoples, and kingdoms, and nations. The power of government which resides in them comes from God, and the duty to obey springs from that power of domination, just as a flower springs from its seed. This duty, therefore, is the source of harmony, of agreement, of union; and consequently, is the bond which holds society together. St. Paul knew this when he counselled his neophytes to submit to the powers that be, saying: 'All power is of God; he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and so incurs damnation.'[1]

[1] Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

Hence, in legislating for the society springing up around him, our holy Father established this principle of obedience as the bond which was to hold it together; to be as it were its life, its very essence; just as he saw that the Divine Legislator had done in the constitution of the human race. Knowing that all power is from God, and that he who holds sway over others is but God's representative, he secures complete obedience to him by stating in as many words that the Superior, in a Religious Body, is the representative of God: 'For, in the monastery he is considered to represent the person of Christ.'[1] St. Benedict thus, at once, ensures the complete subordination of one man to another, throughout the whole body corporate of Religious; he strips obedience of all that might wound the susceptibilities of anyone, and invests it with a dignity which no mere idea of loyalty or of duty to some specially gifted man could impart. He causes men to turn away their eyes from the individual who may chance to wield this power, and from his littleness, his incapacity, his weakness, his faults, his sins, and fixes their gaze upon the great, all-wise, all-holy Being Whose place he holds. He makes them shut their intelligence against all criticism of his proceedings, and forbids them to consider why either this should be ordered or that should be forbidden; why this policy should be pursued, or that should be abandoned; and tells them to look only at what is commanded. In consequence of being taught to regard their Superior as invested with the personality of Christ, they are filled with the profoundest respect, and with the deepest love for him. They are, therefore, ready to follow out his injunctions and to obey even his unexpressed wishes, with as great alacrity and eagerness as if he had issued a mandate which had to be executed in virtue of the solemn contract which they have made with God. Hence, we repeat that obedience, which makes men submit to one another, constitutes the bond which holds the Religious

[1] Regula, Cap. ii.

Body together. It may, therefore, with good reason, be called the very essence of that Body's existence.

If we wish for a confirmation of this, we have but to contemplate the process of disintegration which goes on in any society of men, when obedience is weakened, and when it begins to lose its hold upon the members of which that society is composed. At first there is disunion, there is confusion, then conflict, then revolt, then ruin! An army becomes a mere rabble when the reins of authority drop from the feeble grasp of its general; a ship is doomed to destruction when the crew refuses to acknowledge the authority of its captain; a society splits up into endless divisions and sub-divisions when it will not be ruled by a head. Of each, that saying of Our Lord is true: 'A kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation.'[1] But strength and stability come of union; union springs from the due subordination of power to power, and subordination is begotten of obedience. Hence, we may conclude that the Religious Order in which the spirit of obedience is weak and languishing, is on the point of dissolution; if obedience is gone, that Order is dead! It may have a sort of galvanic life, and its parts may cohere, from the mere force of the vigour which it once possessed; but the life, such as it is, and the union, such as it appears to be, will vanish upon the first touch of any power which shall attempt to employ that body in the work for which it was called into being. Let it but be required to do something which it does not wish to do, that is, let it be called upon to obey in a matter which runs counter to the armed wills of its individual members, and straightway, like the bodies which are sometimes found in an apparently good state of preservation in our Cathedral Churches, it will crumble into dust. We repeat, the Religious Order is not worthy of the name, and the Religious is but the simulacrum of what he pretends to be, unless there is an obedient spirit both in the one and in the other. Our holy Founder considers him only to be a Religious who gives up his will,[2]

[1] St. Luke xi. 17. [2] Prolog. in Reg.

and desires to have a Superior over him.[1] Therefore, when a monk takes back his will, and seeks to be from under the control of a Superior, he practically loses the essence of his State. He becomes a rebel. Are there not many to be found in Dioceses, in Monasteries, in Religious Orders, and in Congregations, who, to all intents and purposes, have done this? Alas! we have grave reasons to fear so! Of a truth we may ask: 'Virum *obedientem* quis inveniet? Procul et de ultimis finibus pretium ejus.'[2] For, the number of those who make a holocaust of their will, is small. Many imagine that they do so, but they do it not in effect. After some years of Religious Life, their aim seems to be, not to do the will of their Superior, but to accomplish their own. As long as his will happens to be theirs also, it is all well and good. The moment that it differs from theirs, there is an internal revolt against it. That which he wishes, is criticised; is examined into minutely; is condemned. They expostulate with him; their opinions differ from his; they reason against his conclusions; they do all in their power to make him change his views. If he yields, they are content and they obey; if he remains firm and insists upon carrying out his resolve, they repine, they grow angry, and sometimes refuse to obey. In all this there is self-will. It is not the Superior's will that is accomplished, but the will of the subject. The inferior makes it, we might almost say, the business of his life to do nothing but what he pleases; his study is to win his Superior over to do, not what the Superior shall deem most fitting, but what will meet with his own approval. This, forsooth, is a man who has given up his own will—'*abrenuntians propriis voluntatibus*,'[3] who has deliberatly chosen to have a Superior over him—'*non suo arbitrio vivens, sed ambulans alieno judicio et imperio*.'[4] He may wear the habit and he may have the tonsure, but he is not a monk, he is not a Religious, unless he is obedient. He came to Religion to serve, not to rule. If he strives to rule, to have his own

[1] Cap. v.
[2] Prov. xxxi. 10.
[3] Regula. Prolog.
[4] *Ibid.*, Cap. v.

way, to do his own will, he has cast aside the very essence of his State ; he does not seek God, or the salvation of his soul. He will find nothing but trouble and sorrow in the divine service, and will run great risk of losing the end for which God gave him life.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### *FIRST FOUR QUALITIES OF OBEDIENCE.*

NATURAL reason, as well as the most unquestionable of authorities, tells us that all power is from God, and that this is true in a very particular way of that power which is exercised by holy men for the advancement of the kingdom of God and the perfection of His children. To those who wield this power Our Lord Himself says: 'He that heareth you, heareth Me;' and He wills that this should hold good in the case of even those among them who are not faithful in their personal allegiance to Himself; for, though they are wicked in their lives, yet, because they are vested with His authority, they are, therefore, to be obeyed with due submission and humility within the limits of their jurisdiction. It was on this account that He bade the people listen to and follow the teaching of the Pharisees, because it was their office to expound the Law: 'The Scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses; all things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works, do ye not; for, they say, and do not.'[1] Therefore, because our Superiors are vested with power to govern and to teach, they hold, with respect to us, the place of God. Hence, St. Benedict tells us that the Abbot or Superior in a monastery is our Christ, and consequently, that he must be obeyed as if he was the Lord Himself.

From this grand principle, it follows that Religious obedience must have certain qualities which raise it indefinitely above the level of that dutiful service paid by men

[1] St. Matt. xxiii. 2,3.

to their earthly rulers, either out of personal attachment or chivalrous sentiments of loyalty. Into some of these qualities we will examine at once, reserving our remarks upon the rest for the succeeding chapter.

The first quality of obedience is that it should be given to Superiors, for no other motive than that of personal love of Christ. The Superior holds His place; rules in His stead; commands with His authority and in virtue of a commission received from Him. For these reasons, and for no others, we submit ourselves to his will and undertake to do whatever he shall ordain. By acting thus, we wish to liken ourselves to Him who came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him Who sent Him; Who in as many words told the Apostles that those who should do this would be obeying Himself; for, that in hearing the mandates of Superiors and in following out their will, they would be listening to His words and following out His own injunctions; and, furthermore, that by neglecting or by despising them, they would be neglecting and despising Him. St. Paul gave this principle to servants and exhorted them to act upon it with respect to their earthly masters: 'Be obedient,' he says, 'to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your hearts, as to Christ. Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ; doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men.'[1]

With much greater reason ought it to be a principle of action with us whose lives are dedicated to the service of God, and 'who hold nothing dearer to us than Christ.'[2] He is the object of our obedience, since we act for Him; He is the end of our obedience, since we live but to gain Him; and, therefore, no other motive should be suffered to enter into our actions, all which are done in virtue of obedience. If this principle be the spring or motive power in our hearts, we shall honour the Superior, simply and solely because he is Our Lord's representative. He may not, in

[1] Ephes. vi. 5-7. [2] Regula, Cap. v.

other respects, be worthy of honour; he may not have learning, or judgment, or prudence; he may be impulsive and imperious; he may be wrathful, vindictive, partial; yet, because he is our Superior, and therefore our Christ, we shall pay him all honour. We shall respect his orders; we shall love them; we shall in the minutest particular carry them into effect. If we look at him from any other point of view, save from that from which our holy Father wishes us to regard him, our obedience will lose this, its most important and essential characteristic; for, then we shall not obey for Christ's sake. We shall not see Jesus in our Superior. Human considerations will at once usurp the place of that motive which makes Religious obedience what it is. It is our own pleasure that we shall seek. We shall look for the Superior to order what will be in accordance with our humour. We shall eagerly long for those employments and offices which will minister to our self-love and vanity; but as for those which are in any way repugnant to our natural inclinations, or to our tastes, we shall flee from them, shun them and do all in our power to induce him not to impose them upon us.

It is in consequence of dispositions such as these, that Religious are oftentimes induced to yield an unwilling obedience, lest Superiors should be angry with them and displeased with their conduct. They obey in order to conciliate their good-will and to meet with their approval. By this worldly-wise obsequiousness, their aim is to be promoted to offices of honour and trust. Their entire obedience is nothing more than a kind of diplomatic service, by which they wish to ingratiate themselves for their own advancement and pleasure with the powers that be. This is the result of losing sight of St. Benedict's grand principle 'that in the monastery, and, in fact, everywhere else, the Superior holds the place of Christ.' Obedience becomes vitiated; or, rather, it is not obedience at all. It is worldly wisdom, diplomacy, astuteness, anything you please, but it is not obedience. Hence, the necessity for keeping that principle ever before the mind, and by its

presence there, for purifying our obedience from all unworthy motives which would rob it of its excellence and hinder it from winning the magnificent rewards which are its due.

Again; besides being pure in its motive, obedience ought to have another quality which will assuredly adorn it, if it spring from the principle which our holy Father lays down as the very root of the Religious Life. For, if we obey our Superior, because he represents to us the person of Christ, our obedience to him will be given *without murmuring*. God, Who is all-wise and all-just, can never order anything except what is most holy and most conducive to our welfare. He knows all things and sees all things; whereas we are full of ignorance, and we often mistake evil for good and good for evil. Hence, when His representative gives us an order, we may be certain that, no matter how grievous, difficult, irrational and ill-timed it may seem to us to be, it has, notwithstanding, been given, with the approval, or at least with the permission of Our good Father. Therefore, if we bear in mind that our Superior is ordering us in the person and with the authority of Christ, we shall not murmur at anything that he may impose upon us. For, all repugnance to obey and all murmuring arise from a forgetfulness of this principle. When it is forgotten, or when it has been purposely thrust out of the mind, we at once begin to see in our Superior the simple man—weak, ignorant, incapable, imperfect as we ourselves are. Why should he have authority over us? Why should he command thus when a different line of policy would be so much better? How imprudent it is to act as he is acting; how short-sighted; how detrimental to the true interests of the Community! Hence arise remonstrances, arguments, representations, indignation, angry words, contempt; and, when all else fails, and we must, perforce, comply with the will of the Superior, it is with a very bad grace that we carry his orders into effect. The fear of his anger and resentment breaks down the opposition of our will. We obey without

any spirit; coldly, murmuring in our heart, and sometimes suffering our internal wrath to find vent in words; or, at least, we obey with an answer which betrays our unwillingness to yield; or our dissatisfied air makes it evident to our Superior and to others that it is only our body that obeys.

Such obedience as this is displeasing, not only to men, but to God. It will not receive any reward from Him even though the work ordered should be accomplished. For, it is not the work at which God looks, but at the heart of the worker.[1] He desires a perfect holocaust. He is not satisfied with a maimed offering, such as that obedience is in which a man's heart has no share: 'If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it to thy prince, and see whether he will be pleased with it, or if he will regard thy face, saith the Lord of hosts.'[2] If in the work which you perform through obedience, you do not give your will to God, are you not maiming that work? Is it not your will that He looks for? Is not that will the most precious part of your offering? Now, when you murmur, do you not keep it back, and thus offer to God a something that is blind, and lame, and sick; a something hateful not only to Him, but even to mortal men? Hence, if there is one thing which St. Benedict detests more than any other, and especially legislates against, it is against this spirit of murmuring: 'If any Brother,' he says, 'is found murmuring, or in any way gainsaying the Rule or contemning the orders of his elders, let him, in accordance with the precept of the Lord, be once or twice secretly admonished by them. If he amends not, let him be publicly reprehended before all. If in spite of this he does not correct himself, let him be subjected to excommunication, provided that he understands the nature of the punishment. But, if he remains obstinate, let him undergo corporal chastisement.'[3] Farther on, when fixing the measure of drink which he deems sufficient for

[1] Regula, Cap. v. [2] Malach. i. 8. [3] Regula, Cap. xxiiii.

the needs of all, he gives another special caution against murmuring, when he says: 'This we admonish *above all things*, that there never be any murmuring.'[1] Again; when speaking of the quality of their clothing, he reverts once more to the peril of murmuring, and says: 'Let not the monks *find fault* with the colour or with the coarseness of these things; they shall be such as can be procured in the country in which they live, or be bought at the cheapest rate.'[2] The reason of this special hatred is, first, because murmuring is directed, not against the individual Superior, but against God Whom the Superior represents: 'Your murmuring,' said Moses to the children of Israel, 'is not against us, but against the Lord.'[3] In the next place, because it plucks the heart out of obedience, and thus destroys the essence of the Religious Life. It is as a very pestilence in a Religious house, infecting and destroying the good spirit of those who are striving to live only for God. What wonder, then, that he prescribes a total separation from the rest of the Brotherhood for all those who are stricken with this plague, and punishes it with scourging, as a most grave offence against the law?

Instead of murmuring, we ought rather to obey with joy; because in obeying our Superior we are obeying Christ. Joy, therefore, is the third quality which should grace our service of obedience. This is the reason which our holy Father gives for prescribing a joyous service of God: 'The obedience which is given to Superiors is given to God Who hath said: "He that heareth you, heareth Me." Hence, it ought to be done by the disciples with a good will, because God loveth a cheerful giver.'[4] Now, why should God require cheerfulness and joy in the service which we pay to Him? 'Because, like everyone who gives a recompense for service done, He rewards only actions that are worthy of reward. These, as all admit, are virtuous actions only. But in all such acts we may observe that there are two things to be taken into account:

[1] Regula, Cap. xi. [2] Regula, Cap. iv. [3] Exod. xvi. 8. [4] Regula, Cap. v.

first, the species of the act itself, and secondly, the manner in which the act is performed. It follows from this that unless both these things are in harmony the one with the other in the act itself, that act cannot be said to be simply virtuous; just as no man can be called perfectly just, unless he performs works of justice which are in harmony with the virtue of justice; that is to say, unless he accomplishes them with pleasure and joy. Now, though among men who see only the things that appear, it is sufficient to perform an apparently virtuous act, yet with God Who sees the heart the appearance of virtue will not suffice; the act must be performed also in a becoming manner, that is to say, with pleasure and joy. Hence it is that God is not satisfied with one who gives to Him what is merely His due; but only with him who, besides giving, bestows his gift with cheerfulness. Therefore, the royal Psalmist calls upon us to serve God with gladness;[1] the Wise Man bids us 'in every gift to show a cheerful countenance;'[2] and the Apostle exhorts him who shows mercy, to do so 'with cheerfulness.'[3]

An obedience such as this, which is given with joy, is pleasing, as our great Legislator says, not only to God, but to men.[4] For, a Superior is filled with gladness when he finds that his subjects are eager to do what he commands; but he is sorrowful and full of anxiety when they obey only on compulsion. Because of their irreligious spirit, he fears whenever he has to issue any order, lest it should cause disturbance in the house of God; and his constant aim seems to be, not to carry out his own will, but to order only such things as will be in harmony with the wills of his subjects. When this is the case, we may well ask, where is their subjection? Where is their obedience? They are not doing the will of him who, in their regard, holds the place of Christ, but their own will! He is obliged, on account of their imperfection, to suffer them to do as they please. They did not come to Religion to

[1] Ps. xcix. [2] Ecclus. xxxv. 11.

[3] Rom. xii. 1; St. Thomas, in II. ad Cor. c. 9, Lect. I. [4] Regula, Cap. v

do this, but rather the will of Him Who called them. Therefore, let them look well to themselves, and clearly understand their position. They came to do the will of another, not their own. Let them put away their own will, and then they will be Religious in very deed,—true imitators of Christ Who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; not to do His own will, but the will of Him Who sent Him.

An obedience pure in its motive, unmurmuring in its acceptance of hard and difficult commands, and joyous in its execution of them, cannot fail to have one other quality, which, like the rest, flows from the principle 'that God is represented by the person of the Superior;' this is promptitude in carrying into effect whatever it may please him to command. Our holy Father calls this obedience which is without delay, the first degree of that admirable virtue on which he builds the whole structure of the Religious Life. He considers that it is but natural to look for such a quality in the obedience of those who, in order to escape the fire of hell, or to win the glory of the world to come, have determined to hold nothing in higher esteem than they hold Christ, in Whose footsteps they desire to tread. But because Christ is no longer visible on earth, and, consequently He cannot be either heard or seen, they regard as their visible Christ the man who rules over them, for, unto him their Lord and Master has said: 'He that heareth you, heareth Me.' As soon, therefore, as he opens his mouth to command, they make no more delay in executing his order than if it had come from the lips of Jesus Christ: 'At the hearing of the ear they obey him.'[1] They presently abandon all that is occupying their attention, no matter how deeply engrossed they may be in it: 'They give up their own will, and leave it unfinished in order to follow, with the speedy foot of obedience, the voice of him who commands. Thus, as it were, in one and the same moment, the command of the master and the work of the disciple, perfected by the fear of God, go

[1] Ps. xvii. 45.

both jointly together, and they are speedily effected by those who thirst after life everlasting.' By such promptitude as this, they walk in the narrow way which leadeth to life, and by acting thus they do not live according to their own will, or follow their own pleasure. Their chief desire is always to have a Superior over them; to live according to his command; and to walk according to his direction.[1] To what source may we trace such excellent dispositions as these, except to that deep humility which divests men of self-will, and makes them, for the love of God, and in imitation of Our Lord, submit themselves to a Superior.[2] To this, and to nothing else, must we ascribe that heroism of obedience which causes Religious promptly to execute commands hard, galling to the natural man, and rendered still more unpalatable by the injurious language with which they are imposed. Knowing that he only who persevereth to the end shall be saved,[3] they strengthen their hearts and await the Lord.[4] For His sake they suffer death all the day long; they are willing to be esteemed as sheep for the slaughter;[5] to be proved and tried as silver is tried, with fire; to be brought into the snare, and to have tribulation laid upon their backs; to have men placed over their heads;[6] nay, even to turn the other cheek when smitten for His sake; to yield up their cloak to him who taketh their coat, and to carry a burthen twice as far as they are required by the exactions of a rigorous Superior.[7]

This, and much more besides, are all those ready to accomplish who have grasped the true notion of obedience, and who keep ever present before their minds why it is that they should not hesitate for a single instant to execute what obedience calls upon them to do. For, they consider, and rightly too, that every moment of delay is a refusal to comply with the wishes of God. It is an indulgence of that self-will which clings to us and asserts its dominion over us, almost in spite of ourselves. It is a sacrifice of our first-fruits to the devil; a disloyalty to our King; an incipient

[1] Cap. v. [2] Cap. vii. [3] St. Matt. xxiv. 13. [4] Ps. xxvi. 14.
[5] Ps. xliii. 22. [6] Ps. lxv. 10, 11, 12. [7] St. Matt. v. 39.

revolt against His authority. Most hateful, therefore, are all delays, hesitation, and reluctance, to those who know what obedience is, and to Whom it is given. Most destructive, also, is it of the grace of the Holy Spirit Who suffers no lingering delay. He breathes where He wills, and, unless we correspond with His inspiration at the moment in which He speaks to us, He passes on, and the opportunity is lost.

This was well known to all the great Saints. They never wavered for a single instant after the voice of God had sounded in their ears. When Elias threw his cloak upon Eliseus, as the latter stood over his workmen in the field, Eliseus forthwith left them and cleaved to the great Prophet. The youthful Samuel sprang from his couch and ran to the bedside of the aged priest whose voice he thought was calling him, every time that the Almighty summoned him by name. 'Let us go over to Bethlehem,' was the exclamation of the shepherds, when the Angels had announced the glad tidings of the Infant Saviour's birth. With equal promptitude did Peter and Andrew obey the voice of the Lord, when looking upon them He said: 'Follow Me.' There was no delay; no hesitation; no balancing the swift mind betwixt yes and no. These, and a multitude of others knew what it is to yield a prompt obedience. Their example has been followed, and it is daily and hourly followed, by all who, either in Religion, or out of it in the world, regard the voice of obedience as the voice of God. Of the Solitaries, Cassian says: 'When seated in their cells, engaged in manual labour, or in holy meditation, the first signal that invited them to work or to pray, took each of them immediately from his occupation. So prompt was their obedience that he who had begun to form a letter, left it unfinished and eagerly hastening forth, preferred to leave his task imperfect rather than vitiate his obedience. They set a higher value upon it than upon reading, or upon manual labour, or upon silence, or upon the repose of their cell. They put it before all other virtues, and they were content to lose everything else, rather than violate it.'[1]

[1] Cassian, De Cœnob. Instit., Lib. 4, Cap. 12.

Most acceptable, therefore, unto God, and well-pleasing unto men, will be that obedience which is invested with the qualities about which we have been speaking. It will bear off the reward of Him for Whose sake we offer it, and will win the commendation of those to whom we submit ourselves, if what it enjoins be always accomplished with a *pure* motive; *promptly*, and not through fear, or in a cold, heartless, sluggish manner, but with the readiness and the speed of one who is working for love. A proof that this motive lends wings to our obedience will be that we execute the task of our obedience without *murmuring*, and with a secret joy which pours the sunshine with which it is flooding our soul over all our features, till they smile again with pleasure, and gladden the hearts, and strengthen the hands of those whose difficult task it is to govern souls and to accommodate themselves to the humours of many, some of whom must be led by fair speeches, others by sharp reprehensions, and others by persuasion, to whose character and intelligence they are obliged to adapt themselves so as not to suffer any loss in the flock committed to their care, but rather to rejoice in its increase and profit.

[1] Regula, Cap. ii., De Abbate.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### *LAST FOUR QUALITIES OF OBEDIENCE.*

THE obedience of him who lives according to St. Benedict's grand fundamental principle that 'the Superior holds the place of God' will be, as we saw in the preceding chapter, pure in its motive, and in the manner of its execution prompt, joyous, and unmurmuring. But this is not all; for, that principle is fruitful in other lofty and generous self-sacrifices, to the consideration of which we must now devote our attention. Our investigations will, we think, make manifest to us that it enables us to walk blindly in the narrow path of obedience; courageously to encounter and to overcome the difficulties to be met with in that rugged way; entirely to comply with all the requirements of our subject state; and to do this unweariedly to the very end. In short, from this principle there flows an obedience which is blind, courageous, entire, and persevering.

To regard the Superior, then, as holding the place of Christ, will, first of all, make us blindly obey him. Any other conduct in men who pretend to consider this as one of the principles of the Religious Life would be, to say the least of it, most inconsistent. For, consider what a wide divergence there would otherwise be between our belief and our practice. We stand before the world as maintaining that all power is from God; and, consequently, that he who is invested with power has received it either by the divine will, or by the divine permission. If we are logical, we must, therefore, regard him who is clothed in this authority, as God's representative; and it will follow if he be His representative, that any disobedience shown

to him will be shown to God, and any obedience given to him will be given to God. How inconsistent, therefore, is it in men who hold these principles to hesitate about fulfilling the commands of him whom they believe to derive his power from Christ, whom they regard as Christ's representative, and as being invested with authority to guide them in His name! If their practice is to correspond with their belief, they cannot question any of his commands, or take exception to any of his orders, or ask him, 'Why hast thou done so?' If they act differently, their conduct is not of a piece with their convictions. They hold a principle to be right, and act against it as if it was wrong. They believe a thing to be true, and put it aside as if it was false. To act thus is to act foolishly. But once admit the principle that the Superior holds the place of Christ, and we must, perforce, blindly obey him. When he issues an order we must not reason about it, or hesitate to carry it out, or question its utility, or ask whether it is prudent and profitable, or useless and capricious. For us it must be enough that it has come from him who is the representative of Christ. By hearing and obeying him, we are hearing and obeying Christ. Therefore, as soon as his will is made known to us, we must presently leave all our occupations, we must forsake our own will, we must leave unfinished that which we are about, and, with the speedy foot of obedience, follow by our deeds the voice of him who commands: 'Thus in one and the same moment the precept of the master and the work of the disciple, perfected by the fear of God, go both jointly together and they are speedily accomplished.' Now, why this mode of action, which in the eyes of the world wears the appearance of folly? Because of the principle which lies at the bottom of all obedience that is worthy of the name; God is speaking and commanding in the person of our Superior, and, therefore, we do not wish to live according to our own will or to follow our own desires and pleasures, or to quit the school of obedience; but we choose to have a Superior over us, and to walk according to his command and direction,

so as never to do our own will, but the will of Him Who bids us come and follow Him.[1]

Such conduct as this is not irrational; for, it is based upon a rational principle, it flows naturally from a complete understanding of what is comprised in the saying of the Apostle: 'All power is of God.' Now, if it is of God, it must be God's will that it should be respected and obeyed; for, He is a lover of order, He is the source of order which springs from a due subordination of one power to another. Not all can hold the same rank; not all can give commands. Some must be above, others below; some must plan, others must execute; and the due submission of the various grades to one another is as much an ordinance of God and a creation of His infinite wisdom, as is the power to command, which, as all admit, derives its origin from Him.

Moreover, God has established the principle of order, not only in His physical world, but in His moral world. In this latter He has, by a positive precept, made manifest His will that there should be harmony among its various constituent parts. This is to be effected by the dutiful submission of one part to another. Having established that precept, He expects us to yield to it an obedience which does not ask questions. He gives us no reason for having established it, and thereby intimates what are the duties of each of the parties concerned in the maintenance of that moral order. One has to see that the precepts which it issues are in accordance with eternal justice; the other has to receive those precepts with submission, and to execute them without delay.

When He imposed His first great command upon Adam, He looked for blind submission to it, and blind compliance with it. As time goes on, and the plan of His dealings with men begins to unfold itself, we still perceive that this method is observed. When he ordered Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, He gave no reason for the command, but expected blind obedience. When He ordered

[1] Regula, Cap. v.

the meek and lowly Joseph to flee into Egypt and to take His only begotten Son and the Virgin Mother into the land of the stranger, He looked for an unquestioning, blind obedience. When He struck down Saul the persecutor, and made him a zealous Apostle of what he had heretofore hunted to the death, the first sacrifice that He required of him was a sacrifice of his reason and of his judgment. He asked him for a blind obedience. When, therefore, we see all this, and begin to understand the principles by which God is governing a race that fell by rebellion, and must consequently win back its pristine glory by humble obedience, we perceive the deep wisdom of St. Paul's saying, that all power is of God, and that God wills that power to be obeyed, and obeyed without asking for reasons; obeyed, in one word, with blind submission. Therefore, when men act upon these principles established by eternal, infinite wisdom, they connot be acting in an irrational manner; they are walking on the lines marked out for the guidance of a blind and erring race by a wisdom which sees farther and more clearly than it is possible for the creatures of an hour to see.

As a matter of fact, conduct such as this is so far from being irrational, that the stigma of folly ought rather to be fastened upon any other line of action which is guided by a different principle. For, is it not irrational to act upon a principle which would burst asunder the ties that hold society together? Does not the principle of disobedience, or of an obedience which must have a reason for its submission, lead to the pursuance of some such suicidal policy as this? What, in fact, would become of any power, of any authority whatever, which must needs show cause why its orders should be obeyed, before it can obtain a compliance with its mandates? It would speedily fall into contempt, and deservedly cease to exist. The respective parties which constitute human society, those, namely, who command and those who obey, would change places; they whose duty it is to command, would be forced to obey; and they who have not the wisdom to plan, or the courage to execute,

or the calmness to rule, would take the reins of power into their clumsy hands, and then ruin would not be far distant; for, the disturbance of right order is always the forerunner of destruction. Besides, how can conduct first suggested by the devil be worthy of the imitation of rational men? Must they not with good reason be ranked among the multitude of fools, if they follow the lead of him who was the first to revolt against the infinite wisdom of Almighty God? Was it not he that taught our first parents to question the authority of the command, which they had hitherto respected and obeyed with the blind, unreasoning obedience of little children? 'Why,' said he to them, 'hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree of Paradise?'[1] As soon as they had listened to his suggestion, and had learnt to question, and to ask reasons for the command of God, they speedily fell into disobedience, and they were cast forth from Paradise. Their folly in listening to the devil, is equalled only by that of those who, imitating them, desire to have a reason from their Superiors for every order, before they will condescend to obey it.

But, besides obeying blindly, without questioning, and without seeking for reasons, we must learn to obey courageously; for, courage is a quality indispensably necessary for him who wishes to tread the path of obedience. We do not, of course, mean to say that he must have that animal courage which without quailing confronts peril to life and limb; but rather that higher order of courage which is intellectual and moral; which looks without flinching upon the obstacles standing in its way, upon the difficulties arising to dispute its passage, and never despairs even when that which brings it to a standstill seems to be insurmountable. Such obstacles as these are sure to be met with in the way of obedience, because it is at all times so distasteful to the natural man.

[1] Gen. iii. 1, et Guliemus Abbas. S. Theod., Epist. ad Frat. de Monte Dei, c. v., No. 14.

Self-will has a strange vitality about it. Though we imagine that we have killed it outright, yet it revives as soon as a favourable opportunity pours the warm sunshine of its presence upon it. Hence, it is morally impossible that, in the course of our daily life, there should not arise occasions in which even the most well-disposed will be painfully conscious that obedience is pressing upon some tender place, and that the pressure makes them wince and feel how hard it is to obey and to give up self. Our holy Father frequently, in the course of the Rule, says as much, and intimates the necessity for having that moral courage which will not sit down hopeless in the presence of these petty obstacles, crying out: 'There is a lion in the way, and a lioness in the roads.'[1] In the introduction to the Rule he says: 'We are about to institute a school of the service of God, in which school we hope that nothing will be ordained either too rigorous or burthensome. But if, in some things, we proceed with a little severity, sound reason so advising, for the amendment of vices or for the preserving of charity, do not straightway, for fear thereof, flee from the way of salvation, which is always strait and difficult in the beginning.'[2] Farther on he speaks of obedience as 'a narrow way,' and consequently a difficult way in which to travel, the chief difficulty being the renunciation of self-will, of unholy desires, and of worldly pleasures, all which must be cast aside at the entrance, otherwise no progress can be made along the way that leads to life.[3] Again; he intimates that the exactions of obedience will make the moral coward afraid; will cause him to yield slowly, without heart, with words of murmuring, with an air which shows how much it costs him to comply.[4] In another place he gives his disciples to understand that, in obedience, they will have imposed upon them things which are hard, contrary to the natural man, and injurious; he tells them that they must have the courage to embrace these hard things by divorcing themselves from self-will, by accepting them with a quiet cons-

[1] Prov. xxvi. 13. [2] Prol. in Reg, [3] Cap. v. [4] *Ibid.*

cience; and by accepting them not once only, but unwearied-ly to the very end.[1] Therefore, it is evident that moral courage is necessary for all who wish to tread in the path of obedience. Now, what will be a more fruitful source of this courage than the grand principle, that the Superior holds the place of God? —'Christi enim agere vices in monasterio creditur.'[2] With this deeply graven upon the heart, what will not the Religious dare to do? True it is that the Superior may be but a frail, fallible man, ignorant, prejudiced perhaps, and capricious. He may be hard, unbending, inconsiderate; and his orders may, in consequence, be peremptory and difficult to execute. But yet he is nothing more than an instrument in the hands of God. The orders which he issues are the will of God passing through the hands of a human agent, and consequently tinged with that human agent's imperfections, just as water is coloured by the minerals through which it flows. Therefore, because they are the orders of God, they must be for our good; for, they have been dictated by the wise and fatherly Providence of Him, compared with Whose love for us our mother's affection is but cold and indifferent. What does it matter, then, how these orders may reach us; whether it is through a kind and considerate Superior, or through one who is little concerned when he tramples upon our tenderest feelings and wounds our most delicate susceptibilities? They must be carried into effect, and that courageously, unflinchingly. They are the commands of God. The accidental unloveliness which disfigures them and prevents us from seeing in them the beauty and the wisdom of God, must not, and it will not make us lose heart, if we remember St. Benedict's words: 'Christi enim agere vices in monasterio creditur.' Christ, by the instrumentality of His representative, is only proving and trying us, as silver and gold are tried in the fire. He is leading us into a snare, so to speak, to test our faith and our confidence in Him. He has, therefore, placed men over our heads, to impose burthens upon our backs; to

[1] Cap. vii. 2, 3, 4, Degrees of Humility. [2] Cap. ii.

treat us harshly; to make us suffer a species of death all the day long, as if we were but sheep for the slaughter. All this is hard to bear; but it is not man that is inflicting it upon us; it is Our heavenly Father. This thought will give us courage. The Lord is our helper; whom shall we fear? No difficulty shall stop us! We shall be filled with courage to grapple with every obstacle that opposes our onward progress, and, by the might and with the help of Him Who so tenderly loves us, we shall be able to thrust it aside, and to press onward to the prize of our supernal vocation. Our guiding principle will inspire us with the courage to be obedient, and the obedient man, as we know, shall speak of victory.[1]

Furthermore, this same principle that causes us to obey blindly and courageously, also enables us to give an *entire* obedience to those whom it teaches us to look upon as holding Christ's place in our regard. For, if we believe this, and act upon it, we must obey all Superiors; and obey them in all that they command; and obey them with all the faculties of our soul, without setting any limit to our submission except in such cases as those in which it would be sinful to obey. Our holy Father expresses this conclusion in one brief sentence when he says: 'The third degree of humility is, that a man submit himself for the love of God, *with all obedience* to his Superior.'[2] If this principle become the mainspring of our life, it will make us give an entire obedience to all Superiors, without being influenced in our submission by the individual character of the man who is vested with authority. For, it veils all other adjuncts from our eyes, and allows us to see only Him Whose person Superiors represent. Hence, the personal qualities of the man will be of no account to bend our will in the right direction. The Superior who happens to hold sway over us may be a wise, temperate, gentle, and considerate man, who weighs well beforehand the strength of the shoulders upon which he is about to impose a burthen, and takes into consideration the temper of mind, the tastes

[1] Prov. xxi. 28. [2] Cap. vii.

and the abilities of him whose will is in his power; or again, he may be just the reverse—one gifted with but small ability, uneven in temper, rough in speech and in act, indifferent to everything except to the fact that a certain task has to be done, and that someone must do it. The truly obedient man will take none of these defects into account. They will have no influence upon him; what he attends to is the fact that the Superior is his Christ. The man is completely hidden by the splendour of that Divine Person Whom he represents, and he is, therefore, obeyed, although he may be rough, peremptory, inconsiderate, and intractable.

The obedient man is indifferent, not only to the personal qualities of those who direct his obedience, but to the nature of the commands which they impose. He obeys them all, and so makes his obedience *entire* in this respect also. He does not select *some* of the duties allotted to him, and perform them with diligence, while at the same time he sets aside others which happen to be distasteful to him. He accepts them as they present themselves; and, whether they are pleasing to him or troublesome, he performs them all. He does not accomplish his task in part only; each thing that he does is done thoroughly and to the best of his ability. He is scrupulous even as to the way in which the Superior would have him perform it. There is with him no hesitation about accepting the order; no sluggishness in carrying it into effect; no internal murmuring ready to break out into open revolt if but a little more was added to the burthen which is galling his shoulders. Nay, more than this; not content with fulfilling the substance of the command, he is anxious to carry out to the full the intention which moves the Superior to impose it upon him. As for discussing the reasonableness of the Superior's proceedings in ordering either this or that, or for questioning the prudence of his policy in acting in this way or in that, he would look upon himself as a traitor to Jesus Christ if he suffered such a disposition to sway him for a single instant. He would not do so, for, he wishes his obedience to be entire,

and therefore, he submits his judgment as well as his will; for, he considers that it is the place of his Superior to reason, to forecast, to judge of the expediency of this or of that policy; and that it is the part of the subject to hold himself in readiness to carry into effect whatever the Superior shall determine. Instead of examining the clauses of the bond by which he has given up his will, in order to discover how he may limit the power of his Superior to command, he is ever ready to go beyond what it requires, and to be generous even to profusion towards the Lord, Whom it is a glory to serve. Thus, because he sees in the men to whom he is subject the representatives of that glorious Master, he makes his obedience entire; and so eager is he to do this, that he is willing to comply with our holy Father's injunction, and to show the service of his obedience not only to his Superiors, but even to his equals, 'knowing that by this path of obedience he will go unto God,'[1] and will offer up a holocaust of self-will unto Him 'Who came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him Who sent Him; Who was obedient unto death, even unto the death of the Cross.'[2]

There is one other quality which must grace our obedience, otherwise it will profit us nothing to have obeyed blindly, courageously, and in all things without exception, the wishes and the orders of our Superiors; this is the quality of *perseverance*. We must go on subjecting our will to the will of another; we must go on acting under his guidance and walking at his bidding, till the last moment of our life. Our obedience will then be crowned with its fitting reward; but if this quality of perseverance be wanting to it, it will be of no use to us, though adorned with those other excellent attributes of which we have already said so much. But our obedience will not fail to be marked by this most necessary quality, if it be actuated by, and if it be the outcome of St. Benedict's principle: 'Christi vices agere creditur Superior.' For, if it is God that we obey, in the person of him to whom we have given our will, and if this

[1] Cap. lxxi. [2] Philip. ii. 8.

truth is made, as it were, a portion of our intellectual being so as to be the mainspring of our actions, we cannot but *always* obey blindly, entirely, and courageously. If we were obeying a man only, and obeying him because we saw in his character something transcendently superior to ourselves, or if we submitted to him because of his vast learning, or of his far-reaching influence, then there might be a reason, at some time or another, for withdrawing our obedience from him. His superiority to us might, by degrees, grow gradually less, till in time we should surpass him; our own acquirements might increase so much that we should outstrip him; our own influence become so far-reaching as to extend beyond his; then we should have reason for no longer considering ourselves bound to bow our will to his, or to suffer ourselves to be guided and directed by him. But nothing of this kind can happen in our case; for, we obey, because we recognise in the duty of obedience an ordinance of God; and in him who holds power, a representative of Our almighty Lord and Master. Hence, our obedience is not given to man, but to God. We do not obey because the man who holds office, or who is vested with authority happens to be worthy of esteem and compels our admiration and submission. We yield to him simply and solely because he is for us the representative of God; and because, in obeying him, we are obeying God. Consequently, there can never be a time in which we shall be justified in refusing to yield him obedience. God, Whom we obey in our Superior, is always God; always the same infinitely holy, infinitely powerful, infinitely good God and Master; hence, always worthy of our homage and service; always able to claim our allegiance and dutiful submission to His will. Our obedience, therefore, must, as a rational consequence of our fundamental principle, persevere. It must be as blind, as entire, as courageous after ten, twenty, fifty years, as it was when, in the first fervour of our early youth, we promised obedience at the foot of the altar and swore to be loyal liegemen of Jesus Christ. Gray hairs must not plead for an exemption, nor must shoulders

that have borne the weight of dignities and charges of trust, excuse us from remaining under the yoke which we ourselves have taken upon ourselves. The God for love of Whom we did this, ever remains the same; the vow by which we bound ourselves to His service, always exists; and, therefore, our obedience must go on from day to day, 'till the last syllable of recorded time.' This is evidently the mind of our holy Father; for, he gives us to understand that, far from length of service exempting Religious from obedience, it should rather make them perfect in that virtue, and models upon which those who have recently come to Religious Life may look, in order to be stirred up to great fervour and exactitude: 'The eighth degree of humility,' he says, 'is that a monk do nothing but that which the common rule of the monastery, or the example of his *Seniors*, teacheth and exhorteth him to do.'[1] In another place he intimates that those who are raised to the dignity of the priesthood are not the less, on that account, bound to the ordinary discipline of the Rule; and, therefore, he does not at all regard that high office as an excuse from the most stringent observance of monastic discipline: 'Let him that is ordained beware of haughtiness and of pride, and let him not presume to do anything except that which is ordered by the Abbot, well aware that he is now *much more subject* to the discipline of the Rule. Let him not, by reason of his priesthood, forget the obedience and the discipline of the Rule, but rather let him strive to advance more and more in the service of God.'[2] The Rule, in his mind, is to be the master of all, and in all things. He makes no exception of any person; he makes no exception of any command, or of any disciplinary enactment. His words are: 'In *all things*, let *all* follow the Rule as their master, and from it let no man rashly swerve.'[3]

It is evident, therefore, that the principle of looking at our Superior as the representative of Christ and of obeying him for Christ's sake, will cause us to go on steadily in the path of obedience, till the end of our days; following the

[1] Cap. vii. [2] Cap. lxii. [3] Cap. iii

guidance of our Superior without either reasoning or questioning; courageously grappling with the difficulties of such a life; and surmounting the obstacles which it throws in our way; and doing this, not merely on some points and on some occasions, but on *all* points and on *all* occasions, till we pass out of the darkness and the shadows of this world of conflict, into the bright presence of Him for Whose sake we have not feared to incur the imputation of folly in the minds of a perverse and unbelieving generation.

I.O.G.D.

# APPENDIX.

# NOTICE.

This Appendix contains an analysis of each of the chapters of 'Principles of Religious Life.' It has been added to the original work for three reasons:

1. To enable the ordinary reader to obtain a clearer and more comprehensive view of the various subjects treated of in the preceding pages.

2. To be a help to those who may wish to use this volume as a Text Book, from which to learn the outlines of the Spiritual Life.

3. To be of service to those of the Clergy who may wish to draw matter from it, for the instruction of those committed to their care.

# APPENDIX.

## CHAPTER I.

### *RELIGIOUS LIFE.*

### SECTION I.

#### ITS ULTIMATE AND ITS SUBORDINATE END.

THE purpose of a man's life is called his end. This end is twofold, *ultimate* and *subordinate*. The *ultimate* end is that which is chiefly aimed at; the *subordinate* is aimed at only the more securely to win the ultimate end. The ultimate end of every man is the possession of God in heaven. His subordinate end is the perfection of Charity, by which this ultimate end is won. This is St. Thomas's view; but Cassian (Collat. i., No. 7) says that purity of heart is the subordinate end. But by this he means the same thing that St. Thomas expresses by 'perfection of Charity,' for Charity says, 'God alone;' purity of heart says, 'No creature.' Another virtue which enters into the notion of 'perfection' is *humility*. Some call this, perfection itself, as St. Benedict (Reg. c. vii.). Others call it the *foundation* of perfection. To understand how humility is said to be the foundation of perfection, or to be perfection itself, observe that there are four ways in which its repressive power is brought to bear upon the soul: (1) When it causes us not to take credit to ourselves for what we do not possess (St. John i. 20). (2) When it causes us not to prefer our own advantages to the advantages which others possess (1 Cor. iv. 10). (3) When it causes us to acknowledge that what we have is not our own (1 Cor. iv. 7). (4) When it causes us to acknowledge that God is the author of whatever good there may be in us (1 Cor. xv. 10). In this last sense spiritual writers call humility 'the foundation of perfection.' Thus the essence of perfection may be said to consist in three things: *Charity*, or the tendency of the creature to its absolute end—'God alone.' *Humility*, or the true knowledge of self—'I am nothing of myself.' *Purity of heart*, or detachment—nothing out of God.

### SECTION II.

#### INSTRUMENTS OF PERFECTION.

These tools or implements of perfection are not perfection itself; therefore, like all tools, they will be laid aside when we shall have attained our ultimate end. First among these comes *Prayer*. (2) *Divine Grace*. (3) *Attention* to the working of the Holy Spirit. (4) *Imitation of Christ*. (5) *Renunciation*, which is the distinguishing feature of the Religious. (6) *Obedience*, which with some writers includes all renunciation. The Religious makes his renunciation perpetual by his *vow*, which prevents him from ever withdrawing from poverty, chastity, and obedience. This vow constitutes him in a *state* of perfection; inasmuch as it fixes him in a stable way of living, which, being free from the great hindrances to Christian perfection, tends of its own nature to make him perfect.

## SECTION III.

### THE MOTIVE POWER.

As in a watch there is a something upon which all the mechanism depends, and by which it is kept in motion, so also in the Religious Life there is something which inspires Religious with the energy and the courage to do all that such a life requires of them. In a watch it is the main-spring; in the Religious Life, it is the *fear of God*. This fear of God makes the Religious *pray* for help; causes him to be *watchful* over self; *obedient* to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit; eager to *imitate* Jesus Christ, *to deny* himself, and to lead a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience. It is *fear* that usually, in the first instance, brings men to Religion. St. Benedict says it is this that brings them to God (Prol. in Reg.). Cassian calls it 'the principle and the safeguard of our salvation' (Institut. Lib. iv. cxxxix.). This is shown by its effects, which are: (1) *Great sorrow* for past sins; (2) *Eagerness* to do what is pleasing to God; (3) *A continual* advance in virtue; (4) *Formation* of good habits; (5) *Profound peace* of heart.

## SECTION IV.

### PROGRESS IN PERFECTION.

There are two ways of measuring our progress in perfection: (1) by calculating that distance with regard to perfection itself; (2) by seeing with what ease and dexterity we are able to ply the instruments or tools by which perfection is acquired.

*The First Method.*—How do you love God and your neighbour? Are you ready to sacrifice all that stands in the way of your love? Are you detached from creatures? Do you look upon yourself as pure nothing, and upon God as everything?

*The Second Method.*—Examine what proficiency you have acquired in prayer; in imitation of Christ; in obedience to the Holy Spirit; in renunciation in all its branches. Moreover, as the Spiritual Life has been mapped out into three regions or ways, a person will be able to tell how far he has advanced, by discovering in which of the regions he may chance to be.

(1) The *Purgative Way*, in which beginners are engaged in cleansing themselves from their sins and from their evil habits. (2) The *Illuminative Way*, in which those persons are walking who, being cleansed from their sins, are now making progress in virtue. (3) The *Unitive Way*, in which those persons are journeying who, being purged from all vice, and well grounded in virtues, are closely united to God by charity. These may, therefore, be said to be comparatively perfect.

As Charity is common to all three roads, they are not distinct one from another. They are parallel; they all lead to the same end; and at times one uses them all three indifferently.

This mapping out of the Spiritual Life into three regions is no mere fanciful partition; for making it there is a reason, which is drawn from Scripture and from the Fathers (Ps. lxxxiii.; Regula c. viii.; 2 Cor. xiii. 11). St. Augustine says: 'Justice is born in order to become perfect. After birth it is nourished. Thereby it becomes strong. By advancing in strength it becomes perfect' ('De Nat. et Grat.' c. lxx.). St. Thomas says: 'The aim of beginners is to resist impulses contrary to charity; of proficients, to increase and strengthen charity; of the perfect, to attach themselves to, and to enjoy God (II. ii. q. 24, a. 9).

## SECTION V.

### DISCRETION.

In the pursuit of perfection, discretion, or the science of what it is necessary to do, is specially requisite. It discovers the end to be aimed at, and selects the means. In Scripture it is called *wisdom, discernment of spirits, prudence,* and is reckoned by St. Paul among the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 10). The means to acquire it:

(1) Consider the object, the end, and the circumstances of the thing which has to be done. (2) Deliberate maturely; believe not lightly; be not in a hurry rashly to settle matters. (3) Distinguish sins from imperfections; mortal from venial sin; virtue from vice, etc. (4) In your choice, pay no attention to corrupt nature, but simply and solely to the will of God. (5) Resolutions which have been made must be carried into effect.

He who to these means shall add humility of heart, will speedily acquire the virtue of discretion.

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## CHAPTER II.

### *PERFECTION.*

PERFECTION is that to which nothing is wanting. Perfection such as this is *absolute;* but *relative* perfection consists in the fact that nothing is wanting to anything for gaining the end for which it was made. To this kind of perfection man may aspire. During life he may attain to such perfection as is compatible with those who are working towards their true end; but only in the next world can he be actually perfect with that relative perfection for which God has destined him. St. Paul gives a proof of this in his own person (Phil. iii. 12). He compares our perfection in this world to the state of childhood—our perfection in the next world, to that of manhood (1 Cor. xiii. 11). Again; as perfection consists principally in the love of God, and as the perfection of this love is *always* to produce the acts of it, it follows that as this is impossible here below, the acquisition of perfection in the present life is impossible. Moreover, the propensity to sin is never completely destroyed in this life; therefore, there will always be some imperfection adhering to our perfection.

But such *relative* perfection as consists in freedom from mortal sin, and from affection to venial sin, together with close union of our hearts with God, is possible. For, God commands such perfection as this; therefore its attainment is not an impossibility (Deut. xviii. 13: Gen. xvii. 1; St. Matt. v. 41; xix. 21). The Scriptures put the Saints before us as models to be imitated. By mortification we can so far tame our passions as to hinder their irregular motions. We can avoid all deliberate sin. Therefore, relative perfection may be attained here below. Who are obliged to tend to relative perfection? *All men, without exception.*

(1) *All* are obliged to aim at this perfection (Ephes. i. 4; 1 St. Peter i. 15). The *Sacred Scriptures* require a high degree of sanctity (1 St. John ii. 15.;, Cor. vii. 29; St. Luke xiv. 26).

(2) *Religious.*—If ordinary Christians are bound to tend to perfection, are not Religious bound *to be* perfect? No; they are bound only to tend to perfection; but they differ from others by reason of their *actual* renunciation of wealth, of liberty, and of the pleasures of the flesh. They sin mortally against this obligation of tending to perfection when they neglect, *out of contempt* all the means which would lead them to perfection. A person sins mortally by *contempt*, when it is the *will* that resists the principle of authority; if through concupiscence, through anger, or through obstinacy, a person neglects rules,

etc., he is not supposed to sin *out of contempt* (St. Thomas, II. ii., q. 186, a. 9 ad. 3). (2) When they break rules in order to hinder their perfection. (3) When they resolve not to care about their perfection. (4) When they perform, through routine, all that would lead them to perfection.

The teaching of St. Alphonsus upon this question is, that a Religious sins mortally against his obligation of tending to perfection, (1) by neglect of Rules, through *formal* contempt of them or of the Legislator; (2) by a formal resolution *not* to tend to perfection; (3) by scandal, when the matter is grave.

Also, he holds it to be the more common and more probable opinion that, so long as a Religious is resolved to observe all laws and precepts that are obligatory under penalty of mortal sin, he does not offend grievously against his obligation of tending to perfection. For, by wishing to observe under so grave a penalty, that which for others is a matter only of counsel, he thereby actually tends to perfection. He is, of course, speaking only of the precise obligation of tending to perfection; for, he is careful to add: 'It would, on other grounds, be difficult to excuse such a Religious from the guilt of mortal sin.' These grounds are, the danger of violating his vows, and of causing grave laxity in religious discipline. Sanchez teaches that to avoid creating such laxity would be morally impossible for one who has the deliberate intention of transgressing or of neglecting all the rules and the precepts which do not bind under the penalty of mortal sin.

*Ecclesiastics*, by reason of the excellence of their office, are bound to tend to a higher degree of perfection than is that to which either laymen or Religious are bound. St. Thomas says that Bishops and Parish Priests ought to be more perfect than are simple Religious (II. iii., q. 184, a. 5). From the decrees of the Council of Trent we can see that the sentiments of the Church, on this point, are those of St. Thomas (Sess. VI., De Refor., c. i., and Sess. XXII., c. i).

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# CHAPTER III.

## SECTION I.

### LOVE OF GOD.

CHARITY is one of the constituent parts of perfection. It is a divinely infused theological virtue, which makes us love God above all things, and our neighbours, and created things, for God's sake. The love of *benevolence* is that by which we love anyone for his own sake. The love of *concupiscence* is that by which we love him for our own sake. The love of *appreciation* is that by which we esteem some one more than we esteem another; and it is said to be *intensively* greater when our heart is more occupied with love for one person than it is with love for another. The primary object of our love is God. Our love of Him should be the love of *benevolence*. It must be supreme, at the least in appreciation, although it may not be so in intensity. He may be loved, also, with the love of *concupiscence*. To forbid this is Molinism, which is contrary to the teaching of Holy Writ (St. Matt. vi. 33; v. 12; Ps. cxviii. 112). St. Augustine puts forward this hope, as a support in temptation (Sermo. 345). Finally, the Council of Trent anathematises anyone who shall say that a man sins when he does good through hope of reward (Sess. VI., De Justif., c. 31).

*Effects of Charity.*—It makes us just and pleasing to God; it covers a multitude of sins (1 St. Peter iv. 8). It is the bond of perfection (Col. iii. 14.) It is superior to faith and to hope (1 Cor. xiii. 13). It is the greatest and first commandment (St. Matt. xxii. 37). God Himself is called Charity (1 St. John iv. 16). It unites us with God (St. John xiv. 21). It perfects other virtues; and hence we are urged *above all things* to have charity (Col. iii. 14).

*Its Necessity.*—Without it we abide in death (1 St. John iii. 14). Without it, gifts of tongues, prophecy, science, faith, almsgiving, are worth nothing (1 Cor. xiii.).

## SECTION II.

### LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

The command to love our neighbour is put on the same level as is the command to love God. By 'our neighbour' we must understand all who are capable of supernatural beatitude. He must be loved with the love of benevolence; *i.e.*, as we love ourselves (St. Matt. xxii.); as Christ has loved us (St. John xiii.; 1 St. John iv. 21); not with a mere external love, but from the heart (1 St. Peter i. 22). To be a righteous love, it must have certain qualities. (1) The end and the motive of our love must be good. (2) It must be just in its object.

*Enemies.*—Neighbours must be loved, even when they are our *enemies* (St. Matt. v. 44). St. Augustine says: This is no mere counsel, but a formal precept *(in loc. cit.)* We are obliged to seek to be reconciled with them. We are obliged to give them the *common* signs of affection; the *special* signs need not, as a general rule, be given, unless their omission would create scandal. Our charity towards our neighbour should manifest itself in two ways: (1) by wishing him all prosperity; (2) by doing all in our power to make him prosperous.

# CHAPTER IV.

## *PURITY OF HEART*

## SECTION I.

### FREEDOM FROM VENIAL SIN.

Those who are tending to perfection must rid their hearts not only of mortal, but also of venial sins which, though *light* when compared with mortal sins, yet are not light in themselves. For committing a venial sin Moses and Aaron were excluded from the Promised Land. Seventy thousand Bethsamites were slain for looking irreverently at the Ark. For a light sin of vanity David lost an equal number of his subjects. Lot's wife was punished for looking back at the sinful cities. A man was stoned to death by order of God for gathering a little wood on the Sabbath day. Again; sins which we imagine to be venial are sometimes mortal, because circumstances may change their nature; *e.g.*, certain sins of detraction, of uncharitableness, of thought, etc. Moreover, venial sins predispose the soul to fall into mortal sins, just as many and slight illnesses weaken and predispose our bodies to disease and to death.

## SECTION II.

### FREEDOM FROM EVIL HABITS.

To acquire purity of heart we must rid ourselves also of all evil habits. Habit is a facility in doing any action, which facility is acquired by frequent repetition of the same action. The source of evil habits is to be found in the indulgence of the passions, which are 'movements of the sensitive appetite, called into play by the representation made to it of good or of evil. These movements are accompanied by some physical alteration in the body.'

The sensitive appetite has two parts, the *concupiscible*, or that which desires; the *irascible*, or that which contends against whatever opposes its wishes. From the *concupiscible* part proceed the following passions: love, desire, joy, hatred, abomination, sadness. From the *irascible* part proceed the following passions; hope, audacity, despair, fear, anger.

In themselves these passions are good; for they help to bear the soul onward towards its true end. But, because sensible good is the object towards which the passions are directed, they easily fall into disorder, and imperil the soul's safety. Hence, they must be mortified and kept within due bounds (Eccles. xviii. 30; Gal. v. 16; Gen. iv. 16. St. Augustine, Serm. xlviii., De temp., c. 8).

The true good which should be their object must be proposed to them. *Love* must be fixed upon virtue and upon God; *desire* must go after earthly things only as far as they will help unto salvation; *joy* must be glad in the Lord, and in that which will advance our own well-being and the well-being of our neighbour; *hatred* must be turned against sin and that which leads to it; *abomination*, or aversion, must be employed to turn away from sin; *sorrow* must be used to weep over sin; *hope* must be turned to the good things which are to come; *audacity* must be used to undertake great things for God; *despair* must be met and checked; *fear* must be prevented from turning us aside from our duties; *anger* must never be suffered to go beyond just limits. If the passions be thus turned to their proper objects, they will bear the soul onward to its true end, which is God, and a happy eternity.

## SECTION III.

### REGULATION OF THE THOUGHTS.

*The Sources* of thoughts are threefold: *God*; by the light of the Holy Spirit; by His inspirations, etc. (Esther vi. 2; Ps. lxxxiv. 9; St Matt. x. 20; St. John xiv. 23). *The devil;* from this evil spirit come thoughts which aim at the destruction of the soul (St. John xiii. 2, 27; St. Peter, Acts. v. 3.; Eccles. x. 4; 3 King xxii. 22). *Ourselves;* when they come from our remembrance of that which we have done, or of that which we have understood (Ps. lxxvi 6; xciii. 11).

When thoughts present themselves to our mind, we must reject those which come from the devil and from corrupt nature, and accept only those which come from the Holy Spirit of God. We cannot prevent evil thoughts from presenting themselves; but we can prevent them from entering the mind and abiding there (Ps. lxxxiii 6). Our Lord reproaches the Jews for thinking evil; His reproach would be unjust if they were unable to keep bad thoughts out of their minds (St. Matt. ix. 4). Vain would be the exhortation of Isaias i. 16; vain that of Jeremias iv. 14. God would not threaten to examine our thoughts unless we were able to reject those which are evil (Isaias lxvi. 18; Rom. ii. 15). Therefore, we are able to invite good thoughts into our minds, and to keep out those which are evil.

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# CHAPTER V.

## *HUMILITY.*

1. *Its Nature.*—It is a virtue by which we put a curb upon the mind, and prevent it from tending immoderately to lofty things above itself. It is a *virtue*, for in every good there is something which *attracts*, *i.e.*, the good, and something which *repels*, *i.e.*, the difficulty of gaining it. In those movements which repel, a moral virtue must strengthen and push forward; and in those movements which attract, it must moderate and check. The virtue of magnanimity does the first; the virtue of humility does the second.

Humility deals with the appetite, and not with the intellectual powers. For, by it 'we *choose to be abject*' in the house of God. But choice belongs to the appetite, for, the office of humility is to check self from tending to that which is above and beyond it. For this, there is necessary a knowledge of those things for which our powers are inadequate. Hence the knowledge of

defects pertains to humility; it is the rule which must direct our appetite. But humility essentially consists in the appetite itself, and therefore, it is rightly said to be the moderator of the appetite, rather than of the intellectual powers.

It is not the *greatest* of virtues. Charity and the theological virtues come first; next, justice, and particularly legal justice: then comes humility. The perfection of humility, as St. Benedict teaches, is reached, by ascending twelve degrees of this virtue. His doctrine is approved of by St. Thomas. As it is a virtue that has to deal with our appetite for self-exaltation, and as self-knowledge regulates the degree of repression which is necessary, and as the source of self-knowledge is a lowly reverence for God, by comparison with Whom we learn our own nothingness, St. Benedict makes the *First Degree* consist in what belongs to the *root* of humility, this is *the fear of God.* Next he puts the degree which keeps the appetite from tending to great things by not following self-will: *Second Degree.* By submitting the will to Superiors: *Third Degree.* By not shirking difficulties in obedience: *Fourth Degree. Opinions about self.*—Recognising and confessing defects: *Fifth Degree.* In consequence of these, deeming one's self unfit for important offices: *Sixth Degree.* By preferring others to one's self: *Seventh Degree. External manifestation of humility.*—By deeds; by not being *singular* in our actions: *Eighth Degree.* By words; by not anticipating the *time* of speaking: *Ninth Degree.* By not exceeding in the *measure* or in the *way* of speaking: *Eleventh Degree. Signs and Gestures.*—Repressing haughtiness of the eyes. *Twelfth Degree.* Checking unseemly joy; *Tenth degree.*

2. *Its Obligations.*—Whatever we have, or whatever we are, comes from two sources—God and ourselves. All the good comes from God. All the defect comes from ourselves. This distinction will teach us how far we are obliged to go in self-humiliation with respect to other men.

(1) We are not obliged to subject the good which we possess from the bounty of God to the good which we perceive that our neighbour holds from the same source. (2) We are not obliged to subject that which is from ourselves to that which we perceive our neighbour to have from himself. Nevertheless, a man may, by humility, truly submit himself to, and deem himself inferior to all the rest of mankind: (1) Because he may see in his neighbour some good, given to him by God, which he himself does not possess; (2) Because he may see some evil or some defect in himself which is not in his neighbour.

3. *Motives for Humility.*—(1) The *emptiness* and the worthlessness of that exaltation which the soul covets. High position brings not contentment of mind. Fame is empty smoke. Intellectual greatness seems to be a mere nothing when it is obtained. (2) The memory of what we have deserved in punishment of our sins. (3) The memory of the fidelity which we owe to God, inasmuch as we are His servants. (4) The love and the gratitude which we owe to God. He has done everything for us, and we have done so little for Him.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### *VOCAL PRAYER.*

Prayer, or the lifting up of the heart and the mind to God, is divided into *mental* and into *vocal* prayer: *mental*, when only the mind communes with God; *vocal*, when the communings of the mind are expressed in words. The same difference exists between mental prayer and vocal prayer that exists between thought, and that same thought when it is expressed in word. Vocal prayer can then only be called prayer when voice and mind are in accord. Chief among the vocal prayers of the Church is

the *Divine Office*, which is called by a variety of names: the Ecclesiastical Course, the Canonical Hours, the Divine Office, the Breviary, the Work of God, etc. The Canonical Hours are seven in number: Matins with Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers, Complin. The custom of chanting the Divine Office is said to have arisen in the days of St. Jerome, at the end of the fifth century. Some authors trace it back to even Apostolic times.

## SECTION II.

### OBLIGATION OF RECITING THE OFFICE.

The obligation to recite the Office arises from ecclesiastical legislation only. The recitation of the Hours became obligatory, in consequence of an ecclesiastical precept, about the end of the fourth century.

## SECTION III.

### OF THOSE WHO ARE BOUND BY THIS OBLIGATION.

The obligation to recite the Canonical Hours affects three classes of persons in the Church:

(1) *Beneficed Clergymen.* (2) *All those in Holy Orders.* (3) *All Religious* men and women who are professed for the choir and who are in solemn vows.

## SECTION IV.

### FORM OF RECITING THE HOURS.

Pius V. in 1565 ordained that the form of reciting the Hours should be that which is drawn up in the Roman Breviary. To this all were obliged to conform, unless for the Canonical Hours they had used a rite which went back as far as 1368. It is probable that a Regular, who has not his own Breviary with him, would satisfy his obligation by reciting the Roman Office. A Religious, out of choir, would not satisfy his obligation by reciting the Roman Office.

*Time for Reciting.*—There is a *natural* day, consisting of twenty-four equal hours, from midnight till the following midnight. Also, there is an *artificial* day containing twelve hours—from sunrise till sunset—and an artificial night containing twelve hours—from sunset till sunrise. The hours of this night are shorter in summer and longer in winter. The hours of this artificial day are shorter in winter and longer in summer. The artificial day is divided into four equal parts or quarters. Three hours of the first quarter are called *Prime;* three hours of the second, *Tierce:* three hours of the third, *Sext;* three hours of the fourth, *None.* Prime begins at sunrise; Tierce, at the end of the third artificial hour; Sext, at the end of the sixth, or mid-day; None at the end of the ninth. The artificial night is divided into four quarters, which are called *Vigiliæ* or night watches. The first begins at sunset; the fourth ends at sunrise. The first watch begins at Vespers; the second is close upon midnight; the third extends to cock-crowing; the fourth ends at sunrise. In the early ages the Canonical Hours were recited at the times indicated by their names: Prime, at about six in the morning during the Equinoxes, but earlier in summer and later in winter; Tierce, at about nine o'clock; Sext, about mid-day; None, at three o'clock; Vespers and Complin, after sunset. Matins were recited at the second, the third, and the fourth watch. Lauds were recited just before Prime.

At the present day the time for the recitation varies considerably. In some monasteries, Matins and Lauds are recited at midnight. In others, and in collegiate and in cathedral churches, in the early morning. In others they are recited on the preceding evening. Prime is recited at sunrise; Tierce and

Sext, are recited at nine o'clock; None is recited at mid-day; Vespers, are recited at two or at three; Complin, is recited at sunset. To invert without a reason the order of the Canonical Hours is a venial sin, because it is to trangress the command of the Church in a slight matter. To invert them for any reasonable motive is free from all fault. A priest ought to have said Matins and Lauds before he celebrates Mass; but any reasonable cause will excuse him from fault.

## SECTION V.

### OF THE COMPLETION AND OF THE INTERRUPTION OF THE HOURS.

As the Church orders a *complete* and not a mutilated Office, anyone who culpably omits a notable part, either in the same Hour or in the different Hours of the same day, is guilty of a mortal sin. 'A notable part' is generally considered to be that which would be equivalent to one of the little Hours. Unavoidable omissions, unless they are very great, and unless they might have been foreseen and prevented, are considered to be supplied by the choir, which is looked upon as a kind of mystical body, of which those who recite are the members. Persons who are voluntarily distracted and who in consequence of their distractions omit a notable part, are bound afterwards to supply the omission. This holds good, also, in the case of those who take up their verse of the Psalm, before the opposite choir has finished the one which it is reciting.

He who omits all the Hours commits only one sin; because they are not prescribed by distinct precepts, but by one precept. A person might, however, commit many mortal sins by omitting the whole Office if, for instance, he determined to omit only Matins, then resolved to omit Lauds, and so on. The Hours must be recited; a mental reading of them will not suffice. If anyone cannot recite the whole Office, he is bound to recite the part which he is able to recite, even if it were but one little Hour. It is lawful for one person to procure another to recite the Office with him, provided that it is said in alternate verses, and that the person who recites hears what his companion says. If a person cannot by himself recite the Office, it is a commonly received opinion that he is bound to procure some one to recite it with him, that is, if he can conveniently procure one. When the choir recites one verse of a Psalm, and the organ then plays the music of the next verse, a person is always deputed to recite the verse for the rest of the choir. This must be done, otherwise the obligation of the Office would not be satisfied. To interrupt the Office without a cause is a venial sin of irreverence; but if there is any rational cause for so doing, there is no sin whatever in breaking it off, and resuming it at our convenience.

## SECTION VI.

### OF INTENTION AND OF ATTENTION.

*Intention* is an act of the will, by which we purpose to do something. *Attention* is an act of the intellect, by which we consider, or bring the mind to advert to something. Intention may be of three kinds: (1) *Actual*, when we determine to do something, and set about doing it; this actual intention is *implicit* if we do not say anything about it; *explicit* if we state our intention in as many words. (2) *Virtual*, which perseveres throughout the work which we intend to do, in virtue of the force or impetus left in the mind by the actual intention. This is considered to persevere and to last till it is changed into another intention. (3) *Habitual*, which is the result of an oft-repeated act, by reason of which there is left in the mind a propensity to do something. Intention, therefore, may exist in any of these three ways. Those who are bound to recite the Canonical Hours

must recite them with *some* intention of praying to, and of worshipping God. *Habitual* intention will not suffice, because it does not constitute a human act. *Virtual* intention will suffice in the course of recitation, for, it is impossible to keep up an actual intention throughout the whole Office. Therefore, as *virtual* intention presupposes *actual* intention, it is requisite, for the satisfaction of the obligation of the Canonical Hours, that an *actual intention* of worshipping God should have been formed at some time, at least implicity. So much, then, for intention.

Now for the *attention* requisite in the Canonical Hours. *Attention* is that act of the intellect, by which we advert to something. There may be three kinds of attention to the Office. (1) *Superficial; i.e.*, to the words, in order not to make any mistake in the pronunciation of them. (2) *Literal; i.e.*, to the sense, in order to grasp the meaning of the words. (3) *Spiritual, i.e.*, to God, to the thing asked for, and to anything else that pertains to God.

Each of these attentions may be habitual, or actual, or virtual. From what has been already said, it will be evident that *habitual* attention will not suffice; that *actual* is not essential; and that *virtual* will be sufficient to satisfy the obligation of the Hours.

All this is commonly enough admitted by authors; there is, however, some divergence of opinion about *internal* attention. The question is whether this is so essential to the due recitation of the Hours, that if it is wanting, the obligation of reciting them is not fulfilled. Some writers maintain that *external* attention is enough to satisfy this obligation, or that attention which is nothing more than an outwardly modest comportment, excluding everything that would hinder internal attention. Others maintain that it is not sufficient, and that the Office must be repeated. They support their opinion by the decree of the Lateran Council, held under Innocent III., in which the Clergy are ordered, in virtue of holy obedience, *studiously and devoutly* to celebrate the Divine Office. The Councils of Trèves and Milan observe that the word *studiously* refers to the office of the lips; the word *devoutly* to the office of the heart.

Moreover, the Council of Trent orders Clerics to recite the Divine Office *reverently*, *distinctly*, *devoutly*. By the word *reverently*, a modest posture of body is ordered; by the word *distinctly*, a right pronunciation of the words, or external devotion, is ordered; therefore, by the word 'devoutly,' *internal* devotion is ordered; for, if this is not the meaning, then we must admit that the Council has added a word without any reason whatever.

St. Alphonsus, however, together with a crowd of eminent theologians, maintains that if to external attention there is added the intention of worshipping God, the obligation of the Divine Office is satisfied.

## SECTION VII.

### CAUSES WHICH EXCUSE FROM THE RECITATION OF THE HOURS.

(1) *Physical impotence*, such as blindness, forgetfulness, want of a Breviary, etc. This last cause does not excuse, if the person is able to recite by heart a notable portion. (2) *Moral impotence*, such as either scandal, or grave risk to self or to others. (3) *A legitimate dispensation.* The Pope can dispense from this, as well as from all other Ecclesiastical Laws, whether the cause assigned is a just cause or not, provided only that it is a *true* cause. If the cause for the dispensation is not a just one, the dispensation is valid, but illicit; *i.e.*, the person sins who obtains it, and also the person who grants it. The Bishop can dispense from this law, not by ordinary, but by delegated power. Regular and Conventual Prelates can dispense from it in the case of their subjects, in the same way in which Bishops dispense.

A person who foresees that he will be prevented from saying the Hours at the time fixed for them, is obliged to anticipate that time, within the same

day; because the duty of reciting the Office binds him the whole day; and the time fixed for its recital is not fixed in order to end the obligation, but to urge its fulfilment. We have said *within the same day*, for, it is doubtful whether he is obliged to anticipate the Office of the morrow, if he foresees that he will not be able to say it on the day itself. Some writers say that he is not, because an obligation which comes in force on the morrow cannot bind us to-day.

The opposite opinion is to be strongly urged in practice. If a person cannot recite the Canonical Hours, he is not bound to recite any other prayers in their stead. He is not bound to listen to another person reciting them; for, his obligation is a *personal* one. Nor is he bound to procure a substitute to recite in his stead, for the same reason. By reciting the 'Sacrosanctæ' either at the end of the Hours, or after any of the Hours, there is gained an indulgence by which all the venial defects committed during the Hour or the Hours are forgiven; so that one is freed from the obligation of repeating what one has recited amiss.

### SECTION VIII.

Gives a method of devoutly reciting the Canonical Hours.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *MEDITATION—ITS NECESSITY, UTILITY, AND OBLIGATION.*

MEDITATION is the application of the faculties of the soul to consider and reflect upon some subject. It may be employed to improve the mind, and then it is nothing more than an intellectual exercise. Also, it may be used to advance the soul in the knowledge and the love of God; then it becomes a prayer. It is the first stage of mental prayer, and it is employed to instruct the mind, and to bring the great truths before the will, in order to make the will adhere to good, and decline from evil, by causing the soul to pray for grace to be strengthened to do both these acts.

1. *Its Necessity.*—The unseen things of faith make less impression upon us than does the material world around us. Hence they are liable to become for us like so many unrealities. It is, however, all-important that they should not. They ought to stand out before the mind like palpable things. Meditation causes them to do so. Hence its necessity.

2. *Its Utility.*—By means of meditation we acquire a firm grasp of the science of salvation. It does for us what it effects for those who pursue worldly science. In order to get to the root of things they search, and follow up their discoveries step by step. They reflect upon the knowledge which they have already acquired. They compare, they analyse, they put together, and thus become masters of the branch which they have made the object of their studies. Meditation does precisely the same thing for the Christian. By reflecting, etc., he learns all about God, and his own personal relations with Him. He is filled with love of Him, with sorrow for having offended Him, with hatred of sin. He contemns himself, he shuns evil, he practises virtue. Hence the Sacred Scriptures inculcate the utility of, and the necessity for meditation: Deut. vi. 7; Josue i. 8; 1 Tim. iv. 15; Ps. i. 2; cxviii. 2, 92. Also the Fathers: St. Bernard, De Consid., Lib. i. c. 7; St. Ambrose, In Ps. cxviii. 29; St. Augustine, on the same Psalm.

3. *Its Obligation.*—There is not any obligation to pray in the way which is prescribed in meditation; hence meditation is not necessary in such a way as that salvation is impossible without it. Our Lord, when asked what is necessary to gain everlasting life, said: 'Keep the commandments.' There is no rigorous precept about it; for, the obligation of prayer is satisfied by vocal prayer as well as by meditation. In the case of Religious, the obligation of meditation arises from the statutes and the rules of their Institute.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *MATTER FOR MEDITATION.*

THE best sources whence matter may be drawn for meditation are the *fear* of God and the *love* of God.

1. *The Fear of God.*—He is our Master, Creator, Last End. We cannot retire beyond the glance of His eye, or the reach of His arm. We must die. We must meet Him. We must fall into His hands. If we have done well, He will reward; if ill, He will punish. Before us on the one hand is heaven; on the other is hell. Each of these thoughts is a mine whence may be dug matter for meditation, on which our intellect and our will may exercise themselves throughout the course of our lives.

2. *The Love of God.*—By the fear of God we *begin* our conversion—we lay the foundations. By the love of God we build up within ourselves a truly Christian character. Contemplating Him as He is revealed to us by the dogmatic teaching of the Church, we see His goodness, mercy, and love, especially in His dealings with us. The consideration of these attributes fills us with a deep reverential awe of the Godhead; with confusion for our temerity in offending such infinite perfection; with deep sorrow for past offences; and with an earnest determination to serve a God Who is so worthy of our adoration and of our love.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### *VARIOUS PARTS OF MEDITATION.*

THE preparation is twofold: (1) *remote*, removing the obstacles of prayer; (2) *proximate*, making certain acts which immediately precede prayer. These are faith, adoration, humility, sorrow, petition, offering. Next, the imagination pictures the mystery or the incident which is to be considered. After this follows:

*The body* of the meditation, in which all the faculties of the mind are employed upon the subject of our prayer. *The memory* recalls all the incidents of the subject. *The intelligence* examines, judges, reasons, draws conclusions. *The will* either accepts or rejects these conclusions: It accepts them if the matter presented to it is good; it rejects them if it is bad. *The affections* are then employed to embrace what the will has accepted, or to turn away from what it has rejected. They petition God for grace to carry into effect what is the outcome of the whole meditation. This consists in resolutions to do better for the future; these must be particular, and even very special. *The conclusion* of the meditation consists in three acts, which are: (1) *Thanksgiving;* (2) *Offering;* (3) *Petition.*

### A METHOD OF MEDITATION,

### ACCORDING TO THE PLAN OF ST. IGNATIUS.

*Preparatory Prayer.*

*Faith.*—O my God! I firmly believe that Thou art here present.

*Adoration.*—I adore Thee from the abyss of my nothingness.

*Humility.*—Lord! I ought now to be in hell on account of my sins.

*Sorrow.*—I am grieved for having offended Thee.

*Petition.*—Eterna! Father, through the merits of Jesus, and the prayers of Mary, give me grace to draw fruit from this meditation.

*Offering.*—To God the Father, I give my memory; to God the Son, my understanding; to God the Holy Ghost, my will. To thee, my most sweet

and loving Mother Mary, I give my imagination. Holy Father St. Benedict, and ye, my holy Patrons, make intercession for me.

*Body of the Meditation.*—Upon each point of the meditation the three powers of the soul must be exercised. The understanding should be employed to find out what hindrances have to be removed, and what means are to be used, in order to ensure success for the future. If by the consideration of the first point the soul is moved to make acts of faith, hope, love of God, etc., it must continue to dwell upon them and to entertain the Holy Spirit. It must not proceed to the consideration of the second point so long as the impulse of the Holy Spirit lasts.

- *Memory*
  - Recall the subject-matter.
  - Make an act of faith.
  - This is meant for me.
- *Understanding*
  - What must be my conclusions?
  - Why?
  - Because
    - Proper.
    - Useful.
    - Necessary.
  - How have I acted hitherto?
- *Will*
  - RESOLUTIONS.
  - Practical, Particular, Humble — as to
    - Time.
    - Place.
    - Persons.
  - AFFECTIONS.
  - God
    - Adoration.
    - Joy.
    - Praise.
  - Self
    - Hatred.
    - Confusion.
  - Mixed
    - Thanks.
    - Sorrow.
    - Resignation.

*Conclusion.*

- *Examination*
  - Examination of parts.
  - Sorrow for what is ill done.
  - Thanks for what is well done.
- *Conclusion*
  - Colloquy with God.
  - Choice of ejaculation.
  - Resolution.

- *Petitions*
  - For self
    - Perseverance.
    - Love of God.
    - Particular grace.
  - For others
    - Confessor.
    - Parents.
    - Superiors.
    - Friends.
  - For Church
    - Sinners.
    - Dying.
    - Souls in Purgatory.

## THE SULPICIAN METHOD OF MEDITATION,

### Approved of by Père Olier, and founded on the Method of Prayer used by the Fathers of the Desert.

*Preparation.*

*Remote* - - - { Removing { Sin. / The passions. / The thought of creatures.

*Less Remote* - - { Preparing subject overnight. / Reviewing it next morning. / Eliciting affections.

*Proximate* - - { Putting ourselves in God's presence. / Acknowledging our unworthiness and the necessity for God's grace.

*Body of the Prayer*.*

1. Adoration, or Jesus in our mouth - - - } Thus expressed by our Lord { 'Hallowed be Thy Name.'
2. Communion, or Jesus in our heart - - - { 'Thy kingdom come.'
3. Co-operation, or Jesus in our hand - - - { 'Thy will be done.'

*In the first part* - { Adore. / Praise. / Thank. / Love.

*In the second part* - { Transfer to the heart that which has been adored, praised, loved.

*In the third part* - { Co-operate with the graces received, by fervent colloquies, and by generous resolutions.

* St. Ambrose expresses these three parts thus: 1. Signaculum in ore ut semper confiteamur; 2 signaculum in corde ut semper diligamus; 3 signaculum in brachio ut semper operemur.

(*a*) If we experience any secret operations of the Holy Spirit in our soul during the 'second part,' we ought to keep ourselves in perfect silence and repose, in order that we may receive the full effect of such spiritual communications, and we ought not to go on while these operations last.

(*b*) The first part, *adoration*, is extremely important: (1) because it leads us to contemplate Our Lord as the source of virtues; (2) because it makes us regard Him as our original model; (3) because our adoration of God is a more perfect act of religion than our petitioning Him for grace; (4) because it is the shortest, surest, and most efficacious way to perfection.

(*c*) In the second part, *communion*, we must (1) convince ourselves, chiefly by motives of faith, that the grace which we ask for is most important for us; (2) we must strive to see how greatly we are at present in need of that grace, and how many opportunities of acquiring it we have lost; (3) we must pray for it with simplicity, through the merits of Our Lord and the graces of our Lady, by thanksgiving for past graces, by insinuation, like the sister of Lazarus: 'Lord! he whom Thou lovest is sick.'

(*d*) In the third part, *co-operation*, we make our resolutions, which must be: (1) particular, or, if general, united with particular ones; (2) present,

or likely to be tested that very day; (3) efficacious, that is, such as will be carried out with fidelity, and such as we explicitly intend to carry out with fidelity.

### Conclusion.

This consists in three acts: (1) In thanksgiving for the graces which He has given us during prayer; for having endured us in His presence; and for having enabled us to pray. (2) We must beg pardon for the faults which we have committed in our prayer, through negligence, lukewarmness, distraction, inattention, and restlessness. (3) We must put it into the hands of our blessed Lady to offer it to God, in order to supply our defects, and to obtain all blessings. Then we should, according to St. Francis of Sales, form for ourselves 'a spiritual nosegay,' that is, resolve frequently to call to mind some thought which has moved us during the meditation. We should never depart from prayer without begging God's grace for parents, for confessors, for brethren, for sinners, and for the souls in Purgatory.

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## CHAPTER X.

### *HINDRANCES OF MENTAL PRAYER.*

First among these are *distractions* of mind. To remove these distractions we must attack them in their source or centre. (1) *The imagination*, which calls to its aid those things which pander to our predominant passion. *Pride* fills the imagination with visions of greatness; *gluttony*, with pictures of what gratifies the appetite; *anger*, with fancied slights and wrongs; *revenge*, with ideas of retaliation; *lust*, with scenes of carnal pleasure, etc. (2) *The unguarded senses:* the eye, the taste, the sense of smell, the touch—all which, being the gates to the soul, will give ingress to a thousand different ideas, unless they be kept carefully closed against the entrance of these ideas. (3) *Unmortified passions*—for when these fasten upon any object they hold the soul a captive to that object. (4) *Shallowness and instability of mind*, which cause our thoughts to flit from one object to another, without the power of resting long upon any.

Distractions, however, are sometimes sent by God or are permitted by Him as a trial (Job xvii. 11; Ps. lxii. 1; Jerem.; Lamen. iii. 8, 44; St. Bernard, In Cant., Sermo xxiv.). Sometimes they are sent as a punishment for a slovenly service of God.

*Signs by which to distinguish a trial of this kind from a punishment.*—If it comes upon one who has made progress in perfection, who has been faithful and persevering, the presumption is that it is a *trial*. If it comes upon one who has but recently begun to lead a spiritual life, and has fallen after a time into a careless, slipshod service of God, the presumption is that it is a *punishment*. Why does God thus abandon those who are serving Him well? (1) He is master of His own gifts, and His creatures have no *right* to them. (2) He withdraws all consolation from His servants, to teach them to serve Him for His own sake, and not for His gifts, as hirelings do. (3) To give them an opportunity of expiating past sins, offences and negligences. (4) To make them more highly appreciate these favours when they are bestowed, and to spur them on to greater and more generous efforts. (5) To inspire into their hearts tenderness and compassion for others who are similarly afflicted.

*Remedies of distractions.*—(1) Distractions arising from the imagination are remedied by recalling the intelligence to the subject, and by an act of humility for our inconstancy. (2) Distractions arising from the unguarded senses are remedied by vigilance over them, and by mortification. (3) Dis-

tractions which arise from the passions are remedied by bringing these passions into subjection to our reason. (4) Distractions arising from giddiness and shallowness of mind are remedied by training it to keep to one subject. The three methods of prayer suggested by St. Ignatius will serve admirably to effect this.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *SCRUPLES.*

Scruples are the next hindrance of mental prayer. A scruple is a certain wavering of the mind concerning the malice of some action, past, or present, or to come, about which the scrupulous person cannot arrive at any solution. Scruples are *rational* when the motive of them, though insufficient to cause us to refuse our consent, is yet weighty enough to fill us with fear. They are *irrational* when the motive for suspending the judgment is insufficient.

*Signs of scrupulosity.*—Seeing sin in well-nigh everything; seeking advice, and not following that which is given; self-examination; a wish to repeat past confessions; ridiculous gestures and ejaculations; obstinacy of will, etc.

*Sources of scruples.*—The first source of scruples is the *soul*. The causes of these scruples are either *intrinsic* to the soul, or *extrinsic* to it. (1) *Intrinsic causes:* ignorance; obstinacy of will; fear of God's justice; desire to shun sin, and to have mathematical certainty as to what is, and what is not sinful; badly-regulated austerity. (2) *Extrinsic causes:* the permission of God; the temptations of the devil; the company of the scrupulous. The second source of scruples is the body. *Causes:* a cold, melancholy, hypochondriacal temperament; a weak intellect.

*Remedies.*—(1) Ignorance must be enlightened, by being taught how the mind works, and by being shown how to discriminate between what is a human action, and what is not. That only is a human action, and consequently capable of goodness or of malice, which is performed with *advertence* of the intellect, and with *consent* of the will. (2) If scruples are irrational they must be treated with contempt (1 Machabees ii.; 1 Cor. viii.) (3) Prayer, on the part of the scrupulous person, and also on that of his director and of his friends. (4) Great purity of heart. (5) Blind obedience to the guidance of the director. (6) The use of *epikeia*, or of a favourable but just interpretation of laws. This may be employed in seven cases: (1) The favourable interpretation of a law must be used with the scrupulous. (2) In their case, what is *morally* impossible must be regarded as *absolutely* impossible. (3) No laws bind when their observance would be ridiculous in the eyes of wise and discreet men. (4) In doubt, the scrupulous may do what devout men are accustomed to do. (5) In all positive human laws, a reasonable custom is the best interpreter of their meaning. (6) Excommunication is never incurred 'in foro conscientiæ,' unless a person has been guilty of a mortal sin to which excommunication is attached. (7) A grave danger excuses men from the observance of human laws.

## CHAPTER XII.

### *RATIONAL SCRUPLES.*

Rational scruples, which spring from an over-delicate conscientiousness, from a lively faith, and from a laudable desire to serve God with an undivided heart, are not to be despised (Ps. cxviii. 4; 1 Thess. v. 22).

*Rules for dealing with them.*—(1) In matters of little consequence, let those who are troubled with such scruples as these determine to do that which at the first glance seems good to them. (2) The scruple may be acted against; *i.e.*, the person may perform the action about which he is troubled, when, after consulting the wise and prudent, the doubt still continues, and he cannot have any other certitude about it, except that which is conjectural, or probable. (3) Anyone who, after mature consideration, carries into effect what such scruples point out as most useful, will make more progress in perfection than one who is not harassed by these doubts and fears. (4) When in perplexity between two opinions, the one probable, and *less* sure, the other more probable and more sure, let the scrupulous follow the latter. (5) Let the greatest obedience and docility be shown to the director.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### *AFFECTIVE PRAYER.*

Affective prayer is that by which the soul tends to God and to virtue by various acts of the will. By some writers this is called 'the prayer of forced acts' and 'affections of the will.' They discriminate between an *act* and an *affection* of the will. An *act* is made by the superior will only; an affection is the outcome partly of the will, partly of our sensitive nature. They call them *forced* acts, because on the part of the will there is in the beginning some degree of force necessary to produce them; also, to distinguish them from the prayer of aspiration in which no such force is requisite. Affective prayer is not a species of prayer totally different from the prayer of meditation. It is only a more perfect species of the same kind of prayer. Meditation is to instruct and to put our duties before the will, in order to make the will determine to do them, and to pray for grace to do them; affective prayer is what men use when they are well instructed and willing to do their duty.

I. *For whom affective prayer is not suitable.*—(1) For those who are not instructed in spiritual things, and in the great truths of faith. (2) For those whose hearts are not free from mortal sins and from affection to venial sins. (3) For those who are engaged in the pursuits of an active life.

II. *For whom affective prayer is suitable.*—(1) For those whose hearts are free from mortal sin, from evil habits, and from affection to venial sin. (2) For those who, besides the preceding qualifications, have also the knowledge of the truths of faith and of spiritual things, by which the will may be moved to act and to pray. (3) In addition to the two preceding qualities, those who aspire to affective prayer must not be engaged in any occupations which too much engross the mind, and cause it to feel worry and anxiety.

III. *Signs of a call to affective prayer.*—(1) Meditation ceases to give either food to the mind, or motives which stir the affections. (2) Consciousness of an inward impulse to indulge in affections of the will. (3) Ease in their production, when the soul at last ventures to quit the way of meditation—a venture which it ought not to make without consulting its spiritual director.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### *ORDINARY CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER.*

This is an uplifting of the soul to God, by a simple intuition full of affection. It is like all prayer, in that it is an uplifting of the mind and of the heart to God. It differs from meditation in that it is made without reasoning, without the use of sensible images, without the *perceptible* use of the internal

senses; but by a pure, quiet, simple operation of the mind, which we call *intuition*. It is the outcome of meditation.

*It is a reality* (Ps. xxxiii. 9; St. Matt. v. 8). These texts point to an experimental knowledge of God, and to a close union of will with Him, which, while they are compatible with our state here below, are such as it is impossible to have in the lower levels of the Spiritual life. The way of intuition seems unsuitable for man, and compatible only with the Divine and with the angelic nature; but yet it is not so; for man, by intuition, can know first principles and revealed truths, and this method may, by the grace of God, become his ordinary way of looking upon the truths of faith.

*Objection.*—Contemplation is built up out of reasoning; it rests upon reasoning as a building rests upon its foundation. *Answer.*—Reasoning and contemplation are incompatible. Reasoning implies that the faculties of the mind are working towards the attainment of knowledge; contemplation, that they are resting in and enjoying knowledge already attained. Contemplation rests upon reasoning as a preparatory means, I grant; in any other sense, I deny.

*Objection.*—Intuition is inadequate to produce certitude; also the light of nature, which suffices for the apprehension of first principles and of axioms, is insufficient to produce certitude. *Answer.*—Reason is not the only instrument capable of giving certitude to our minds. A supernatural light accompanies contemplation, and makes the soul perfectly certain of the truths which it is contemplating. For, if the light of faith can make the soul adhere with full certainty to revealed truth, why should not that same light, intensified by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, enable it to have absolute certitude about a truth which it knows by simple intuition?

This species of contemplation does not go beyond the ordinary laws of Divine Providence in the supernatural order; therefore it is called *ordinary contemplation*. It may be said to be *acquired*; that is, by *preparing* the soul for it; but not as a something *due* to us. It may be called *active* in the understanding of the acts which dispose the soul for it. Also, in this sense it may be regarded as the fruit of our own labour. Rigorously speaking, it cannot be called *natural*; for, essentially it is supernatural and infused.

*Objection.*—It is sufficient that it should be extrinsically supernatural. *Answer.*—Ordinary contemplation is meritorious, because it is an act of faith and of charity. Consequently, it must be performed by the aid of grace, for, no merely natural act, which may be performed without such assistance, is meritorious. To maintain that it is, is to fall into the Pelagian heresy.

*Objection.*—Ordinary contemplation is acquired; it is not infused; it is intrinsically natural, and supernatural only in an extrinsic manner. For, the Saints and the Doctors of the Church exhort us to aim at it; to win it; and to obtain it by personal efforts. *Answer.*—These phrases of the Saints and the Doctors of the Church exhort us merely to *prepare* ourselves for contemplation, which is given by God as a grace.

*Objection.*—In ordinary contemplative prayer there is an absence of principles upon which to build it up. The habit of faith is not one of these; nor is theological science, or the gift of understanding, or science, or wisdom. *Answer.*—This objection rests upon the fallacy of saying not this, or that, or the other thing, is a principle of contemplative prayer. Each of the things mentioned may not be a principle *taken by itself;* yet, when most of them are found in anyone, they may be principles which *prepare and dispose him* to contemplation.

## CHAPTER XV.

### *EXTRAORDINARY CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER.*

THE definition of extraordinary contemplative prayer differs in nothing from that of ordinary contemplative prayer, except in this, 'that it is a privilege beyond the common laws of God's providence in the supernatural order.' It is usually accompanied by ecstasies and extraordinary supernatural favours, for which the only rule is God's will. It is *infused* by God; it is *passive*, because the soul is under God's hands as clay is in the hands of the potter; it is the *product* of divine grace; it is accompanied by *graces gratuitously given*, such as prophecy and miracles; it is *supernatural*.

Extraordinary contemplation is a *reality*. St. Laurence Justinian, St. John of the Cross, and St. Theresa speak of it as one of the stages of the Spiritual Life. Richard of St. Victor speaks of it in his book, 'De Contemplatione' (Lib. IV., Cap. 16). The Prophet Joel speaks of the spiritual gifts which accompany contemplation (Cap. ii. 28), and St. Bernard treats of them in the last chapter of his work, 'De Consideratione.'

*Objection.*—Graces gratuitously given are not necessary for extraordinary contemplation; for, they are given chiefly for the edification of others. *Answer.*—They are not *absolutely* requisite, but they are indispensable, as presupposing other virtues and gifts. Their *primary* effect or utility is not for the person to whom they are given; nevertheless, they infuse fresh life, strengthen graces, and make the soul pleasing to God.

Moreover, although gratuitously given, such graces do not necessarily indicate the presence of sanctity in the possessor of them; yet this does not prove that they are not necessary for contemplation. For, when ecstasies and raptures, etc., are given to sinners, they do not flow from the operations of the Holy Spirit, they are gratuitously given graces; however, the contemplation of which we speak, presupposes that the soul which exercises it is perfect. Hence the origin whence it springs is not simply a gratuitously given grace; its origin is charity and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

*Objection.*— Graces gratuitously given do not make extraordinary contemplative prayer more perfect than that which is ordinary; for, this latter is accompanied by sanctifying grace, which is of a more sublime nature than grace gratuitously given. *Answer.*—Graces gratuitously given, in a secondary way dispose the soul to a closer union with God; which fact proves that such graces are not the essence of contemplation, but only accidentally assist and perfect it, *directly* in its relation with others, *indirectly* with respect to him who is in possession of it.

*Objection.*—There are some writers who say that contemplation is a gratuitously given grace. If this be true, it will be found among those enumerated by the Apostle. But no mention is made of it by him; therefore, it is not a gratuitously given grace. *Answer.*—Extraordinary contemplative prayer is not mentioned by St. Paul among the graces gratuitously given; *i.e.*, it is not mentioned *explicitly*, we grant. It is not mentioned *implicitly*, we deny; for, the grace to which it may be referred is mentioned.

It is lawful to aspire to contemplation; for, we may aspire to that which it is lawful for us to possess. This we may see from Ps. xxvi. 8; xlii. 3; liv. 7; St. Matt. xi. 28; Apoc. iii. 20. How may we prudently aspire to contemplation? By prayerfully, humbly, submissively seeking for it (Wisd. vii. 7; St. James i. 5). In a certain sense we may *merit* the grace of contemplation; not, indeed, as a something due to our labour, but as a something which God bestows upon us as a pure favour, when He sees our earnest wishes and our good lives. Our aspirations after contemplation should be made only in a *remote* sort of way, by removing obstacles.

*Objection.*—It is not lawful to ask for the gift of contemplation; for 'the searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed with glory' (Prov. xxv. 27); 'Seek

not the things that are too high for thee' (Eccles. iii. 22); 'Sit in the lowest place' (St. Luke xiv. 10). *Answer.*—We may aspire to possess that which no law, either human or divine, forbids us to possess. But contemplation is prohibited by no law, either human or divine; therefore we may aspire to possess it. The Scriptural authorities quoted in an opposite sense must be understood of all who aspire to contemplation without having the qualifications necessary for it.

*Objection.*—Contemplative prayer exposes those who practise it to vain-glory; to contempt for others who are in the lower stages of the Spiritual Life; to a distaste for the ordinary duties of life; and to the danger of cultivating virtue for the sake of the pleasure which they experience in it, rather than for the glory of God. *Answer.*—All these inconveniences are not the outcome of contemplative prayer; they proceed from the fact that some persons engage in it without being called to it by God, and without having the qualifications necessary for it.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### *NECESSITY FOR DIVINE GRACE.*

1. *That which man is able to do without grace.*—There are four states in which it is possible to conceive man as existing, and as being helped by divine grace: (1) the state of pure nature; (2) the state of unimpaired nature; (3) the state of original justice; (4) the fallen state. This last state is that which is the result of Adam's fall. In order to enable man to regain the position whence he fell, Almighty God gives him help, which is called *grace.* In its widest signification it means anything gratuitously bestowed by God; but in its strictly theological meaning it is defined to be 'a supernatural gift, bestowed gratuitously by God, which of itself tends to a supernatural act and end.' Some graces are *external*, others are *internal.* Grace is called *habitual* when it exists in man as a habit; and *actual* when it exists only as a transient aid which is given to enable man to act. Again, grace is subdivided into (1) *graces gratuitously given*, which are wisdom, science, faith, the power of healing, the gift of miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, the gift of tongues, interpretation of speech; (2) *grace which makes man pleasing to God.*

Without the aid of grace man is able: (1) To execute *some* moral good of the natural order (Rom. i. 20; Exod. i. 20); (2) To love God as the Author of Nature (Rom. i. 21; St. Augustine Epist., 120); (3) To overcome some slight temptations.

Without the aid of divine grace man is not able to do: (1) Anything that will lead him to eternal life (St. John vi. 44; xv. 5; Phil. ii. 13); (2) Or to begin any salutary work (Phil. i. 6; ii. 13); (3); or to persevere in good (St. Augustine, De dono persev., cap. ii., vii.; Jer. xxxii. 40); (4) or to observe all the precepts of the natural law (Rom. vii. 23-25; Wisd. viii. 21). This inability, however, is a *moral*, it is not a *physical* inability. (5) He is not able to love God as the Author of Nature, and above all things, with a *perfect* love, which will be effective, and which will last for a long time. It is probable, however, that he is able to elicit *some* act of appreciatively supreme love in this respect. (6) He is not able to overcome any grave temptation (Ps. xvii. 30; cxvii. 13; St. Matt. xxvi. 41; Wisd. viii. 21; 2 Cor. xii. 9). Therefore, from the very little which we are able to do without God's grace, and from the many and essential duties which we cannot perform without its aid, the utility of, and the necessity for divine grace have been demonstrated.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### *OF INEFFICACIOUS AND OF EFFICACIOUS GRACE.*

VARIOUS epithets are given to divine grace: *Exciting grace, Operating grace, Preventing grace, Helping grace, Subsequent grace.*

The most noteworthy division of grace, is into *sufficient grace*, and into efficacious grace. 1. As regards *sufficient grace*, the term sufficient is in three ways applied to grace: (1) *Precisely sufficient*, when grace is regarded as help from God, without considering whether it is or it is not joined with action on the part of man. In this sense it is opposed to that grace which is called *insufficient* (2) *Positively sufficient*, when it supplies the will with strength equal and proportioned to the good effect which is really produced. In this sense, it is the same as efficacious grace (2 Cor. xii. 9). (3) *Negatively sufficient*, when the grace supplied does not actually produce the effect for which it is given, through the fault of him who is unwilling to consent to it. This is opposed to efficacious grace, and is called *merely sufficient.*

It is this grace that we mean when we speak of *sufficient grace*, and by it we understand that divine help which grace gives to the will, whereby, for the performance of any good work, it receives power which relatively to its present circumstances is complete and unhampered (Isa. v. 4). Man may, and he is able to reject this grace (Prov. i. 24; Isa. lxv. 2; 2 Cor. vi. 1; Acts vii. 15; St. Matt. xi. 21).

*Efficacious Grace* is that whereby God is able to bend our will whithersoever He pleases. Prov. xxi. 1; Phil. ii. 13. On this we have two questions to ask and to answer: 1. How does it move the will to give its assent? 2. In what way does it obtain the effect for which it is given? Observe, first, that efficacious grace may be regarded either in its *first act*, *i.e.*, before it obtains the consent of the will; or in its *second act*, *i.e.*, when it has obtained the consent of the will. The efficacy of grace in the *first act* is due to the power of preventing grace, and this efficacy is essential and intrinsic to grace no matter whether it does or it does not obtain the effect which it is intended to procure. The efficacy of grace in the *second act* is due to the same power of preventing grace, considered conjointly with the effect which, through its instrumentality, has been obtained.

When we speak of efficacious grace, we speak of it in its *first act*, and we have (1) to refute the errors taught by the Reformers concerning it; (2) to give the systems devised to explain how it moves the human will to act, without at the same time destroying its liberty.

Calvin attributed the efficacy of grace to a *necessity* which the will could not resist; Jansenius, to an indeliberate delectation arising from grace which delectation overcomes concupiscence. The Catholic Church teaches that the human will under the influence of grace, is free to choose whatever may seem good to it. The Scriptures prove this; for, they give precepts, hold out threats of punishment, promise rewards, counsel avoidance of evil, etc. All this presupposes the aid of God, and the free choice of the will. Therefore, the efficacy of grace does not consist in a *necessity* imposed upon the will; or in the overmastering power of that delectation of which Jansenius speaks; for, this is contrary to the teaching of the Councils of Trent (Sess. VI., c. 4) and Soissons (Decret. 15).

*Systems of Grace.*—Four systems have been devised by theologians to show how the liberty of the human will is not prejudiced by efficacious grace.

1. *The Thomistic.*—This teaches that God moves every creature to act in accordance with its nature. But man is a free agent; therefore, when moved by God to act, it is in a way consonant with his free nature, *i.e.*, *freely*. According to this system, grace is *intrinsically* efficacious.

2. *The Augustinian.*—In this system the efficacy of grace is attributed to

a heavenly, overmastering delectation, moving the will in such a way that it is *morally* impossible for it not to assent. Hence the will infallibly assents. But it does not thereby lose its liberty; for, the impossibility of dissent being only *moral* and not *physical*, the will is left flexible to either part.

3. *The Molinist.*—In this system the efficacy of grace is attributed to the consent of the will. God's grace is always the same. When the will consents to its motion, grace becomes *efficacious;* when it does not, grace remains *inefficacious.*

4. *The Congruist.*—In this system grace is considered to be twofold (1) *congruous* grace, *i.e.*, suitable to the character, inclinations, circumstances, etc., of him who receives it; (2) *incongruous*, *i.e.*, not adapted to these circumstances. When God wishes man to perform some salutary act, He so orders circumstances that congruous graces shall be bestowed; He accommodates these to the character, etc., of the recipients, and bestows them in suitable circumstances.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### *DISTRIBUTION OF GRACE.*

God gives to all men amply sufficient grace to save their souls: (1) To the Just, to keep His Law; (2) To Sinners, to rise from their sins; (3) To Infidels, to come to the light of faith; (4) To Infants, to be brought to baptism.

(1) *The Just.*—These receive grace to keep all the commandments (2 Cor. x. 13; St. Matt. xi. 30). Therefore, the Council of Trent anathematises all who either shall teach or shall hold the contrary doctrine (Sess. VI., Can. xviii). (2) *Sinners.*—To these God gives sufficient grace to rise from their sins and to be saved (Ezech. xxxiii. 11). This holds good for those also who are hardened in their sins (Acts vii. 51). (3) *Pagans.*—The Wise Man says that God chastises them by little and little, and admonishes them concerning their errors, that, leaving their wickedness, they may believe in Him (Wisd. xii. 1). (4) *Infants.*—God does all that is sufficient and necessary to secure their salvation. He is the universal ruler: yet He admits into the government of the world a multitude of secondary causes. If these causes are irrational, they act with the regularity of machines. If they are rational, they may or they may not fulfil their duties. God suffers this abuse of free-will for a time. When, therefore, God has prepared and furnished means for effecting the salvation of His creatures, He has done all that in Him lies to provide them with means to gain their end. If they fail to do so, it is not through any fault on His part, but through some defect on the part of the secondary causes, which do not do their duty—through malice, or forgetfulness, or neglect, if they are rational causes; through some defect, if they are irrational. It is evident, therefore, that, as far as God is concerned, all that is necessary to secure the birth and the baptism of infants is prepared and provided. The failure in their application lies at the door of secondary causes. This failure could, of course, be prevented by *miracles;* but God does not rule the world by miracles, which are exceptions to the general laws; but by general laws, with the ordinary course of which He is not bound to interfere.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### *HABITUAL GRACE.*

I. *Its Nature.*—Calvin and his followers taught that grace does not impart internal holiness, but simply covers over the sins of men with the cloak of

Christ's merits. The Catholic Church teaches that grace is an internal gift of God, inhering in the soul, and permanently abiding with us (1 Cor. iii. 16; 1 St. John iii. 9). Interpreters take 'the Spirit of God' and 'the Seed of God' to mean sanctifying grace, which *abides* with us. Again; as the stain contracted by the rebellion of Adam is something internal, permanent, habitual, so also should the justice acquired by the obedience of Christ be permanent, habitual, internal (Rom. v. 12). Our Lord says that the means by which men are able to bring forth the supernatural fruits of a holy life is by a principle of life communicated to them, which becomes their own (St. John xv. 3). Hence, Calvin's *imputation* of justice is condemned by the Church (Concil. Trid. Sess. VI., c. 2). Furthermore, grace is not the same as charity. St. Paul says: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost, be with you all' (2 Cor. xiii. 13). Here, grace is made as distinct from charity as is the communication of the Holy Spirit; but the Holy Spirit, Who is given with grace, is really distinct from it; therefore grace is distinct from charity.

II. *Effects of Grace.*—These are *justification* and *merit*. In the Scriptures justification has four significations: (1) The law, which justifies (Ps. cxiii.); (2) The declaration of innocence (Prov. xvii. 15); (3) An increase of justice (Apoc. xxii. 11); (4) The acquisition of justice (Rom. iii. 24). Calvin takes *justification* to mean a declaration of acquittal from guilt; but in his view the sins are not thereby blotted out, they are only covered over. The Church takes *justification* to mean the acquisition of justice, whereby all sin is completely *blotted out*. (1) It is an article of faith that baptism does this in the case of original sin; now if one sin can be *blotted out*, then *all* sins can be blotted out (Isaias xliii. 25; xliv. 22; Mich. vii. 18; St. John i. 29; 1 St. John iii. 14; Ps. l. 9; Ezech. xxxvi. 25). (2) *Renovation of the interior man* (Ezech. xxxvi. 26; 1 Cor. vi. 11; Ephes. iv. 23).

III. *Dispositions for justification.*—We speak of adults only. They are unable by the force of nature only to prepare themselves for justification. *Some* dispositions are requisite; and these are not restricted to *faith* only (Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., c. 9; Isaias xlv. 22; Zachar. i. 3). (1) Faith comes first as the basis; but this is not that faith which is called the *faith of the promises*, but *historical faith*, or belief in all that Christ has taught, and that the Church proposes to us for our belief (Con. Trid., Sess. VI., c. 12; St. Mark xvi. 15; St. John xx. 31; Rom. x. 8). (2) *Good Works* (St. James ii. 14, 24, 26). (3) *Fear of God* (Eccles. i. 27). (4) *Hope* (Prov. xxviii. 25; Rom. viii. 24). (5) *Love of God and of our neighbour* (1) St. John iii. 14). (6) *Penance* (Acts ii. 38; St. Luke xiii. 3).

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## CHAPTER XX.

### *PROPERTIES OF HABITUAL GRACE.*

According to Luther, grace is *equal* in all men; it *cannot be lost* when once received; and the person justified by grace may, in his estimation, be sure with the certainty of faith that his sins are forgiven.

The Catholic Church teaches: (1) *That grace is not equal in all men.* Our Lord says: 'There hath not arisen among them that are born of women a *greater* than John the Baptist' (St. Matt. xi. 11). We are encouraged to strive to become *more and more* holy (Eccles. xviii. 22; 2 Peter iii. 18; Apoc. xxii. 11). Holiness received is increased by good works (Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., c. 24; St. John xiv. 2; 1. Cor. xv. 41). (2) *Grace may be lost.* Either neglect of, or contempt for this gift of God is the cause of its diminution or of its total loss. A fall into mortal sin is the cause of its loss (Ezech. xviii. 26; Apoc. iii. 11; Philip ii. 12; 1 Cor. ix. 27). Examples of this loss of

grace: Saul, Judas, etc. (3) No *certainty* that we have been forgiven, unless this is revealed to us (Eccles. ix. 1). Commenting on this passage, St. Jerome says: 'We must always remain in doubt whether our sufferings are a probation or a punishment.' No one can say that he is free from sin (Prov. xx. 9; 1 Cor. iv. 4; Job. iv. 18; St. Greg., Cura Past., Pars. I., c. xxix.).

## CHAPTER XXI.

### *MERIT.*

The second effect of habitual grace is to make our acts worthy of a reward; *i.e., meritorious.* Merit is called *de condigno*—'condign merit'—if a reward is due to a work from some sort of justice; and *de congruo*—'congruous merit'—when it is due only out of a certain becomingness. The Reformers denied the existence of merit in any work done by men. We have therefore to treat (1) of its existence; (2) of the dispositions requisite to obtain it; (3) of its object.

I. *Existence of Merit.*—The Scriptures take this for granted (Gen. xv. 1; Eccles. xviii. 22; 1 Cor. iii. 8). If a reward is promised, there must be something in our work worthy of it; *i.e., merit.* This also is taken for granted in those passages which teach that God rewards meritorious works (St. Matt. xvi. 27; Apoc. xxii. 12). This reward is not a gratuitous gift, it is the payment of a debt; and hence it argues in the works themselves the existence of merit (Rom. iv. 4; 2 Tim. iv. 7). Hence, if the reward given is bestowed as payment of a debt, it is evident that there is such a thing as *meritum de condigno*—condign merit.

II. *Conditions requisite for Merit.*—These affect merit with respect to (1) the person who merits; (2) the meritorious action; (3) the person who rewards. 1. *The person who merits;* for 'condign merit' two conditions are requisite on his part: (*a*) he must be in a state of grace; (*b*) he must be a living man. 2. *Our actions must not be performed through necessity;* (*c*) they should be good and upright; (*d*) they should be supernatural in their principle and in their motive (2 St. Peter i. 10; St. John v. 29). The reason of the condition (*supernatural in principle*) is that the meritorious act must belong to the same order of things to which the reward belongs wherewith it is crowned. The reason of the condition (*supernatural in its motive*) is that there must be proportion between the means and the end; the end is supernatural, therefore the means must be so, in principle and in motive (St. Matt. x. 41; St. Mark ix. 40). To make any act meritorious, it is not necessary that it should proceed from the virtue of charity; it is sufficient if it proceeds from any supernatural virtue (St. Matt. xix. 16; xxv. 34). 3. *On the Part of God* there must be a *promise* to reward. Resistance to temptation and patient endurance of persecution for justice' sake, are instances of this (St. James i. 12; Heb. vi. 12; x. 36).

## CHAPTER XXII.

### *THE OBJECT OF MERIT.*

The object of merit is the reward which is bestowed upon it by God. This reward is twofold: (1) grace; (2) glory. 1. *Glory.*—By his good works the just man is able to merit eternal glory, and an increase of that glory, and this '*de condigno*' (Concil. Trid., Sess., VI., c. 32; St. Matt. xvi. 27). 2. *Grace.*—(1) Man cannot merit even *congruously* the first actual grace; because the very beginning of justification is owing to the preventing grace of God (Rom. xi. 6). (2) Adults cannot merit '*de condigno*,' the first sanctifying grace

(Rom. iii. 24, and the Church, Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., c. 32). (3) Adults are, however, able to merit '*de condigno*,' *an increase* of sanctifying grace, when once they have obtained it (Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., c. 32; Prov. iv. 18). (4) Man may merit '*de congruo*,' and infallibly—the first sanctifying grace, by perfect contrition (St. Augustine, Epist. 105).

*Three questions* remain to be answered: (1) Can a just man, who has fallen into sin, merit a restoration to grace and favour? He cannot merit this '*de condigno*' (Ezech. xviii. 24; xxxiii. 12). He can merit it '*de congruo*.' (2) Can a just man merit the grace of perseverance? He cannot merit it '*de condigno*,' for, to merit in this way there must be a promise from God to that effect. But no such promise exists; and, therefore, perseverance cannot be merited '*de condigno*' (1 Cor. x. 12; Concil. Trid., Sess. VI., c. 16). Perseverance may be merited '*de congruo*' (2 Peter i. 10). (3) Can one person by his good works, etc., merit for another? He cannot merit the first sanctifying grace for another '*de condigno*' It is not absolutely certain whether he can merit it '*de congruo*.' (St. John xvi. 23; St. Augustine, In Joannem Tract., 102; St. Chrysostom, Homilia ad Pop. xii.; St. James v. 16; Job xlii. 8; St. Augustine, De Sanctis, Sermo 2).

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### *DOCILITY TO THE INSPIRATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.*

I. *Existence of this Internal Guidance.*—The mission of the Holy Ghost is to sanctify our hearts. He descended upon the Redeemer and remained with Him as being the Model Man of the human race (St. Luke iii. 22.) Our Lord promised to give this Spirit to those who should believe in Him. He promised the Holy Spirit to His Apostles to be their Guide and Director (St. John xiv. 26; xvi. 13; St. Mark xiii. 9). This promise was accomplished on the day of Pentecost. St. Peter by His guidance admitted Gentiles to the faith (Acts xi. 12). By His direction the Elders of Antioch sent Saul and Barnabas upon their mission (Acts xiii. 2). The Apostles, by the imposition of hands imparted Him to the faithful at large. They were, consequently, urged to live holily, because of His indwelling in them (1 Cor. iii. 16). His guidance and inspiration are spoken of even under the old Dispensation (Ps. xxiv. 5; v. 9; cxlii. 8; xxiv. 4; cxviii 18; cxlii. 10; xciii. 10). St. Benedict frequently speaks of this internal guidance (Prolog. in Reg. four times, Cap. xx. Cap xl). The fact of the existence of this internal guidance being established, the necessity for being obedient to it follows as a natural consequence.

*Its Necessity.*—There is a carnal as well as a spiritual nature in man. They are at enmity. Everything aids the carnal man, and hampers the movements of the spiritual man. The carnal man, if he prevail, will drown the voice of the Holy Spirit. Hence the spirit of the flesh must be subdued, and to subdue it, great attention must be paid to the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Exhortations to do this (Prov. v. 1; Ecclus. xvi. 24, 25). By this attention David became a man according to God's own heart (Ps. lxxxiv 9; lvi. 8).

*Marks which indicate that inspirations come from the Holy Ghost*—(1) If they come in time of prayer or in consequence of prayer. (2) If that which these inspirations urge us to do is not contrary to the Law of God, or to the prescriptions of obedience. Yet, not *all* these impulses come from God. Little reliance is to be placed on such as come from sensible fervour; a sanguine temperament and a lively imagination have a great deal to do with such as these. But inspirations which come after prayer that has been made with calmness of mind, and during which free

play has not been given to the imagination, are, generally speaking, from the Holy Spirit.

An objection against this guidance is the risk of failing in obedience to Superiors, which risk those persons are supposed to run who think that they have the guidance of the Holy Ghost. This is not a real danger; for, in the Spiritual Life, there are two guides, the one external, and the other internal. The external guide, holding in his hands that power which comes from God, is vested with a sort of *public authority*. The internal guide has but a sort of *private authority*, which must yield to the public authority whenever their respective orders happen to clash. This apparent divergence between the dictates of the internal Guide, and the orders of the external Superior, does not deprive these inspirations of their character, and cause them to become illusions, to which men are subject; for, every inspiration implies this condition, 'unless my Superior shall order matters differently.' The Holy Spirit, God Himself, orders us to go to Superiors for direction (Acts ix. 7).

II. *Means to procure docility to the Holy Ghost.*—(1) To eject the spirit of the flesh from the heart. (2) To banish distracting images. (3) To overcome the spirit of curiosity. (4) To cast out of the heart all inordinate affection to creatures.

III. *Motives to urge us to labour for docility of heart.*—(1) The attainment of perfection depends upon it. (2) Salvation itself depends upon it.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### *IMITATION OF CHRIST.*

Because what we see makes a deeper impression upon us than what we hear, Jesus Christ Himself came among us to give us the example of His divine life. He wishes us to imitate Him, and His Heavenly Father puts Him before us as a model (St. John xiv. 16; St. Matt. xvi. 24; Acts i. 1; St. Matt. xvii. 5; Rom. xiii. 14; Gal. iv. 17; Eph. v. 1).

I. *How are we to imitate Him?* (1) By keeping Him before our mind's eye. (2) By doing this we shall become, *internally*, like Christ, for, we shall *think* as He thought; we shall *judge* of things as He judged of them; we shall *love* that which He loved. (3) We shall become *externally* like Him -grave, modest, charitable, benignant.

*Chief virtues to be imitated*—(1) *Humility*.—He became man (St. John i. 1-13; Phil. ii. 8). He was subject. He worked at a lowly trade. He hid, as far as possible, all His wonderful miracles: 'Learn of Him to be humble of heart.' (2) *Poverty*.—He became poor for our sake (2 Cor. viii. 9). He chose poor parents. He chose the place of His birth, that He might feel the inconvenience of poverty. He lived the life of the poor, working for His daily bread. He prescribed poverty for His Apostles. He died naked on the Cross, robbed of His reputation, and deprived of all consolation. (3) *Chastity*.—He is the Incarnate God, and though the mother chosen for Him is immaculate, yet the Church sings: '*Non horruisti Virginis uterum*.' Even the Angels are not pure in His sight. His bitterest foes never dared to cast any aspersion upon His moral character. (4) *Obedience*.—He came into the world as man in order to obey (Heb. x. 7). He died through obedience. He came not to do His own will (St. John vi. 38). He obeyed the Emperor's decree, and He was born in Bethlehem. He obeyed the Angel who ordered His flight into Egypt and His return thence. He obeyed Mary and Joseph. He obeyed the requirements of the Mosaic Law. He obeyed the Civil Power. He obeyed the Judges, the ministers of justice, even the executioners.

II. *Motives for imitating Christ.*—(1) It is God's express command (St. Matt. xvii. 5). To hear His doctrine to comply with His precept is to conform our lives with His. (2) Christ Himself bids us imitate His virtues (St. Matt. xi. 29). (3) The qualities of our Teacher draw us to Him: gentleness, holiness, wisdom. (4) Conformity in life and in manners with the model left us by Jesus Christ, is a sure sign of predestination to heavenly glory (Rom. viii. 29; St. Peter ii. 21; 2 Tim. ii. 12; Rom. viii. 17; 2 Cor. i. 7).

III. *Means.*—(1) Meditation on the Life of Christ. (2) A faith fruitful in good works (Heb. x. 38; St. James ii. 20).

## CHAPTER XXV.

### *MORTIFICATION.*

If the superior part of man's nature is to hold its right position, it must be by curbing and keeping the inferior part in subjection. This curbing of inferior nature is called *mortification*, and is divided into (1) necessary; (2) free; (3) active; (4) passive; (5) internal; (6) external.

I. *Its necessity.*—What is precious must be held in higher esteem than what is of little value; and what is inferior must be subjected to what is superior. The soul is more precious than the body; it is superior to it. Therefore, the soul must be held in higher esteem than the body, and the body must be subjected to the soul. The body by means of mortification is to be kept in its proper position. The Scriptures exhort and command this (Gen. iii. 19). They point to it as the punishment and as the remedy of sin. By minute legislation they prescribe abstinence from certain meats. The ceremony of the Passover inculcates mortification. *Fasting* is recommended (Joel ii. 13, 15, 17). *Weeping* for sin and doing penance in *sackcloth* (Isa. xxii. 12).

Our Lord called all to do penance and to mortify themselves. The Apostles, who were taught in His school, did the same (Acts ii. 38; iii. 19; xx., xxvi. 20; Rom. viii. 13).

II. *Its utility.*—(1) It impresses upon us a Christ-like character, because it procures for us a plentiful influx of grace which is most efficacious for doing this (Apoc. ii. 7, 17; iii. 5, 12, 21; Ps. xxxiv. 9; xxxv. 9; lxxxiii. 3; Rom. v. 3; viii. 31). (2) It procures great peace of heart (St. James iv. 1). (3) It makes our virtue solid.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### *INTERNAL MORTIFICATION.*

*Its necessity.*—In the process of thought, the *imagination* is made use of by the *memory* to aid it in recalling the ideas of things which the intelligence has heretofore perceived. The memory puts these ideas before the *intelligence*, which by means of reasoning draws conclusions, and submits these to the *will* for its acceptance or for its rejection. Therefore, because the soul is moved to act by the operation of these internal powers, it is evident that they must be subjected to the curb of mortification, in order that the memory may not recall the pictures of the imagination, or the intelligence reflect upon that which is wicked, or the will accept it.

The union of these internal faculties is called by spiritual writers the *heart*, to show us how we ought to prize it, and to defend it from harm.

The best shield to protect it is mortification. Therefore, it is necessary to apply mortification to these spiritual faculties.

(1) *The Memory.*—The imagination must first be brought into subjection by preventing objects from being presented to it which would imprint upon it dangerous impressions. Then the memory must be hindered from recalling *past* impressions which are dangerous, and from weaving together, by the aid of the imagination, pictures of *future* possibilities. (2) *The Intelligence.*—It is with regard to the judgments which it makes and to the conclusions at which it arrives that the curb of mortification must be imposed upon this power. (3) *The Will.*—The imagination, the memory, and the intelligence, are all purveyors to the will. They put before it what it is to accept and what it is to reject. Mortification will enable it to accept the good and to reject the evil; for, mortification trains the will not to accept what is pleasing to inferior nature; not to indulge too freely in what is even lawful. It thus tames and keeps in subjection those enemies which desire to dethrone and enslave the will and it is thus enabled to follow what law and right reason dictate.

There are three degrees in this mortification of the will: (1) To submit the will to God, by means of obedience. (2) To give up our will even in matters which are not obligatory. (3) Not to desire what is pleasing and advantageous to self, but only what is pleasing unto God.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### *BODILY MORTIFICATION.*

I. *Its necessity.*—The soul is, as it were, imprisoned in the body. The five senses are the avenues by which pleasure, pain, knowledge, etc., primarily come to the soul. Also, they are the purveyors of this pleasure, of this pain, of this knowledge. The soul is the ruler of these senses. But in order to rule, the soul must guide, direct, restrain, punish; that is, it must mortify. Therefore, the mortification of the bodily senses is necessary.

(1) *Fasting.*—Christ, by His own example, proved the necessity for this. He pointed out prayer and *fasting* as means to expel the devil from the soul and from the body. Saints and devout men were fully persuaded of the necessity for this species of mortification, as we see by their practice. Josaphat proclaimed a fast to appease the anger of God (2 Paralip. xx. 3); also David (2 Kings xii. 16; Ps. xxxiv. 13; Tobias xii. 8). (2) *Hair-cloth.*—Our Lord speaks of this penitential 'implement' in St. Matt xi. 21; also mention is made of it in Judith iv. 7; viii. 6; ix. 1; Jerem. vi. 26; xlviii. 37; Ps. lxviii. 12. (3) *Mortification of senses.*—The eyes (Job xxxi. 1); the ears (Eccles. xxviii. 28); the touch and the taste (Gen. iii. 3); the tongue (St. James i. 24).

II. *Its application.*—Before pointing out how mortification may be applied, one word will not be out of place about the '*discipline*,' or self-flagellation. It is said to derive its name from that verse of the Psalm, '*apprehendite disciplinam*,' with which this exercise usually began. Its origin may be traced to the family circle; thence it extended itself to the community; and thence to nations and to peoples, as the avenger of evil deeds. From being scourged by another, the transition to scourging one's self is easy and natural. Sorrow for sin, a desire to suffer with Christ, and a wish to tame the flesh would arm the Christian with the *discipline*. The introduction of this species of penitential excercise is attributed to St. Peter Damian; but, as we have said, it goes back to a far earlier date. This, as well as the other species of mortification, should never be undertaken without the advice of the spiritual physician.

There are, however, three general principles which may be given to all as a

guide in the use of mortification. These are: (1) To prevent the senses from fastening themselves upon any object which is forbidden by the Law of God. (2) To teach them temperance in the use of even that which they may lawfully enjoy. (3) To punish them for past indulgence in prohibited pleasures.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### *OF THE VOW IN GENERAL.*

I. *Its nature.*—A vow is a deliberate *promise* made to God of a greater possible good, that is to say, of some good act or work, not impossible, and better than its opposite or its contradictory. Three kinds of acts may be vowed to God: (1) Those which we are already obliged to perform. (2) Those which are merely of counsel. (3) Those which are of themselves indifferent. A vow is *absolute* when it is made without any condition; *conditional*, when there is some condition annexed to it; *personal*, when that which is vowed is something which must be done by the person himself who vows; *real*, when the matter of the vow is some material object.

Also, vows are divided into *simple* and into *solemn* vows. *A simple vow* is a promise made to God, but it is not, in an *absolute* manner, accepted by the Church. *A solemn vow* is a promise made to God, accompanied by an *absolute* and irrevocable surrender of what is vowed, and it is accepted in this *absolute* way by the Church. Therefore, the difference between a simple and a solemn vow consists in the difference of the way in which they are respectively accepted by the Church. Another difference is that in simple vows a person retains the radical dominion over his property. A third, that contracts made by such a one are valid, but illicit; made by a person in solemn vows, they are null and void in the eyes of God and of the Church.

According to the present discipline of the Church, no one can be admitted to take the simple vows of Religion till he has completed his sixteenth year. After a year of novitiate or probation, he is admitted to simple vows, in which he must remain for three years. This period may be prolonged; but when the Religious has attained his twenty-fifth year, he can claim either profession or dismissal. During the period of simple vows he retains radical dominion over his property, but must hand over the administration of it to trustees. The obligation of reciting the Divine Office does not bind him, except in choir.

II. *Obligations of the vow.*—(1) To perform what has been vowed (Eccles. v. 3; 1 Tim. v. 11). (2) The non-performance of it, or the breaking of the promise made, is a sin against the virtue of Religion, and against the reverence and the fidelity which we owe to God. In order that this offence should be mortal in its nature, the *matter* of the vow which is transgressed must be *grave*, and the person who has vowed must have intended to bind himself under a grave penalty. In taking the vows of Religion he *must* bind himself under a grave penalty, for such is the condition laid down by the Church.

III. *Freeing from vows.*—A person may be released from the obligation of vows in one of these four ways: (1) By the *cessation* of the vow. (2) *By the nullification of the vow: i.e.*, by making it void, either (*a*) *directly*, or (*b*) *indirectly*. (3) *By dispensation*. To dispense is not simply to *declare* that, in certain circumstances, either a vow or a law does not bind; it is to *loose* from the obligation of the vow or of the Law.

This power exists in the Church (St. Matt. xvi. 19: xviii. 18; 2 Cor. ii. 10). It is given to Prelates and to Superiors, who have power and jurisdiction in what is called 'the external court'—'*in foro externo*.' (4) *By commutation; i.e.*, by the substitution of some other good work instead of the one which

has been promised, on the understanding that the work so substituted must be carried out under the same obligation under which the work promised by vow had to be accomplished.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### *THE VOW OF POVERTY.*

I. *What it forbids.*—The state of religious poverty consists in renouncing temporal things in such a way as to have no *dominion over, no proprietorship* of them, independently of the will of the Superior. Hence, by the vow of poverty is forbidden: (1) Ownership of temporal things. (2) The use of temporal things as if they were one's own. (3) The giving away without permission, the selling, the changing, or the lending of things which have been given for one's use. Also, either the receiving or the keeping, without permission, of anything that has been given. (4) The disposing of anything given for one's use, according to one's own will. (5) The appropriation of goods which are possessed in common by the Community.

II. *What the vow of poverty allows.*—To accept, to give away, and to dispose of things, with permission of the Superior. This permission is *express*, if it is asked for and is granted by the Superior; it is *tacit*, when from certain signs and circumstances we conjecture and presume that permission is actually given. Also, if a Superior knows of, and tolerates, a custom which he might easily stop, he is thought *tacitly* to assent to it. Permission to accept may be more easily presumed than to give away.

What sin is committed by accepting, by giving away, or by using things without permission? In accepting and in giving away, etc., the same amount is required to constitute a mortal sin against the vow of poverty that is required to constitute a mortal sin against the virtue of justice. As Religious are looked upon as being the children of a family, this sum is about double that which is considered to constitute a mortal sin in the case of those who steal from persons who are not of their own family. The sum requisite to constitute a mortal sin cannot, with accuracy, be determined, it varies according to circumstances (St. Alphonsus, Homo Apostol., No. 32).

If a Religious keeps money for which he has had permission, with the intention of disposing of it at his own pleasure, he sins mortally, if it is more than the sum which we have specified. If he keeps it in his possession longer than the time specified in the Rule or in the Constitutions, he sins according to the gravity of the Rule which he transgresses; mortally, if the Rule binds '*in virtute Sanctæ obedientiæ*,' venially, if it does not. A Religious, without the leave of his Superior, cannot accept money to bestow in charity at his own discretion. He can receive it, and give it away, if the persons to whom he gives it are specified by the donor, as well as the amount to be given to each. In the first case he would be exercising dominion; in the second he would not.

*Peculium*, or a pension, enjoyed by a Religious, is not repugnant to the vow of poverty, if it is enjoyed with the permission of the Superior, and is revocable at his will (*see note p.* 453). Religious, though forbidden to hold anything as their own, yet may hold property as a body corporate.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### *ADVANTAGES OF POVERTY.*

I. *A hundredfold in this Life.*—'St. Peter left a few wretched nets and a fishing boat, and the wealth of the world was poured out at his feet' (St.

Augustine in Ps. cviii). The history of Monastic Orders is another proof. Their founders fled from men, and men went forth into the wilderness to seek them; they gave up wealth, and men brought wealth to them, and laid it at their feet. Each Religious receives this hundredfold in houses, lands, brothers, sisters, etc. (Cassian, Collat. xxiv. c. 26.)

II. *A hundredfold in Spiritual Blessings.*—(1) The renunciation of worldly wealth makes a sure foundation on which to build a holy life. (2) It affords every facility for completing the work. (3) It procures peace and rest for the soul.

III. *The Future Reward.*—(1) This is life everlasting. Even in the present life they have a foretaste of this reward, inasmuch as they may look upon it as theirs by right of inheritance. (2) In the same way the reward of the great day of judgment is theirs by anticipation, for they may look forward with certainty to being on the right hand of the Judge amid the Blessed, who, during their mortal life, were poor in spirit. Thus men who give up all things in this world in order to follow Christ, receive the hundredfold both here and hereafter.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### *THE VOW OF CHASTITY.*

The obligations induced by the vow of chastity affect the body and the soul.

I. *The Body.*—Under certain conditions carnal pleasures are permissible and lawful. But by the vow of chastity, those who are called to higher things are bound to refrain not only from prohibited pleasures, but also from those which are lawful to other men who have not contracted this obligation. The vow affects all the senses of their body. *The Eyes*, by forbidding them to look upon what might excite carnal desires. *The Tongue*, by forbidding it to speak immodestly, or to discourse about what is unchaste, unless duty obliges it to do so. *The Ears*, by forbidding them to listen either to what is unchaste, or to what might be an occasion of scandal. *The Sense of Touch*, by forbidding it to enjoy carnal delights. Also, the vow indirectly prohibits whatever may lead to the violation of the sixth and ninth commandments. Chief among these are all soft treatment of the body, and all pampering of the flesh.

II. *The Soul.*—The vow of chastity affects the powers of the soul by forbidding: (1) *thoughts* of impurity; (2) *desires* of impurity; (3) *the will* to do what is impure. The will may sin in three ways; (1) by taking pleasure in the evil which the imagination puts before it as actually present; (2) by accepting the joy which is felt in the contemplation of some past evil act; (3) by desiring the evil.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### *MEANS TO PRESERVE CHASTITY.*

The means to preserve chastity are (1) natural; (2) supernatural or spiritual.

I. *Natural Means.*—Bodily mortification, which tames the animal instincts of the flesh. (2) Avoiding idleness. The body must labour, the mind must think (Eccles. xxxiii. 29; Ezech. xvi. 49; Regula St. Bened., c. 48; 2 Thess. iii. 8, 10). (3) Shunning occasions of sin.

II. *Supernatural Means.*—(1) Earnest prayer (St. Augustine, Epist. 89; Epist. ad Julianam, 143; Wisd. viii. 21; Ps. I. 12; cxviii. 80.) (2) Humility.

(3) The Sacraments, and chiefly Penance and Holy Eucharist. (4) An ever-abiding consciousness of the presence of God.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### *OF THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE IN GENERAL.*

I. *To what it obliges those who make it.*—The vow of obedience obliges those who are bound by it, to obey the precept or command of their lawful Superior in those things which pertain either directly or indirectly to the observance of the vows, the rules, and the Constitutions. The *vow* is broken only when a subject refuses to obey a Superior, commanding him to do something 'in virtue of his vow.' The Superior is always supposed to do this, when to his order there is annexed some such formula as, 'I command under formal precept;' 'In virtue of the Holy Spirit;' 'In virtue of holy obedience.' He is bound to obey only lawfully constituted Superiors. His obedience is not an unqualified obedience; it is limited by the Rule, and by the Constitutions.

II. *Under what penalty it obliges.*—(1) Because the Superiors of Religious Bodies have received power from the Church to draw up laws and to impose them upon those who wish to become members of those Bodies, it is evident that the wilful infraction of such laws cannot be without some sin (Rom. xiii. 2). (2) Because Superiors, in Religious Communities, hold the place of parents, the infraction of their orders is sinful. The gravity of the sin depends upon the laws which the Rule empowers Superiors to administer. Hence some laws bind under penalty of punishment; others under penalty of a venial fault; others under penalty of mortal sin. Only the vows, and one or two enactments, which vary in different Orders, bind under this grave penalty. A Religious might sin mortally by breaking even rules which bind under penalty of only venial sin; this would happen if he broke them out of *contempt*—not simply for some particular Superior or for some particular law, but for *all law* as law.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### *OBEDIENCE THE ESSENCE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE.*

I. Because it constitutes a man a Religious in the ecclesiastical sense of that term. In investigating the nature of anything, we find that there are in it some elements which need not necessarily be part of it. These are called *accidents*. There are others without which the thing would not be that which it is. These are of the essence of it, *e. g.*, rational animality in man. Now, in a Religious, that thing without which he would not be a Religious, is the vow of obedience, which contains in itself chastity and poverty, but which is not contained either in chastity or in poverty. Therefore, obedience is his essence as a Religious. This is made clearer still by the fact that obedience enters so largely into, and becomes part and parcel of his life. (Regula S. Benedicti, Prolog., cc. iii., lviii., ii.; lxii., lxv., xxxiii., liv., xlvii., li.).

II. Because obedience is essential to the very notion of a Religious Order. If obedience is essential to constitute a man a Religious, then it must be essential also to the body corporate of which he is a member, for, that body is made up of units, to each of which obedience is essential. Again; that

which holds a body together, and prevents it from falling into dissolution, is essential to it. But obedience does this for the Religious Body, and therefore, it is essential to it (Rom. xiii. 2). It is evident that obedience is the essence of a Religious Body from the fact of the disintegration which goes on in it, or in any society of men, when obedience is set aside.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### *QUALITIES OF OBEDIENCE.*

Because Religious obedience is given to Superiors, simply and solely because they represent the person of Christ, it follows that it must have certain qualities which will raise it above that dutiful service paid by men to their Rulers. Therefore it will be:

(1) *Pure in its motive; i. e.*, given to Superiors because they hold the place of God (Ephes. vi. 5), and not because of their personal qualities. (2) *Unmurmuring.*—Obedience given with murmuring does not receive a reward (Regula, S. Bened., cc. v., xxxiii., xl.; Exod. xvi. 8; Malac. i. 8). (3) *Joyous.*—Obedience should have this quality. God loves him 'who giveth cheerfully' (Regula, c. v.; Ps. xcix. 1.; Eccles. xxxv. 11; Rom. xii. 3). (4) *Prompt.*—This quality should grace obedience for the same reason for which a man obeys purely, unmurmuringly, and joyously; *i. e.*, Christ is represented by the Superior (Regula S. Bened., cc. v., vii.).

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### *QUALITIES OF OBEDIENCE.*

There are four other qualities which should grace obedience:

I. *Obedience should be Blind.*—To ask the *reason* for orders would be inconsistent in men who believe that in their regard their Superior holds the place of God. Their only duty is to accept his command and to carry it into effect. This is not to act irrationally. God has willed that man should not ask the reasons for His commands. This he intimates by not giving any reason for His commands, unless that it is His will that it should be so. We see this in the case of our first parents; of Abraham; of St. Joseph; of St. Paul, etc. Therefore, when Religious act upon this principle, which has been established by Infinite Wisdom, they are not acting irrationally. To act upon the opposite principle, and never to obey unless a reason is assigned, is to wish to burst asunder the bonds which God has established to hold Society together.

II. *Obedience must be Courageous.*—*Animal* courage is not required, but *moral* courage, which is not turned aside by difficulties. It is very necessary, because these difficulties bristle in the path of obedience; the chief being self-will, unholy desires, worldly pleasures. Moreover, the exactions of obedience make the moral coward afraid; for, it imposes what is hard, contrary to the natural man, and injurious. The principle 'it is God that issues the order' will give this courage. For though the orders in passing through the hands of an earthly Superior may be tinged with that Superior's imperfections, yet they are the orders of God, and they must be obeyed. This thought will give courage and ensure victory.

III. *Obedience must be Entire.*—The obedient man will obey *all* Superiors.

He will obey *all* lawful commands. He will obey with *all* the faculties of his soul, subjecting his judgment as well as his will.

IV. *Obedience must be Persevering.*—If we obey because the Superior holds the place of Christ, our obedience will always be blind, courageous, and entire: *i.e.*, it will be *persevering*, for, God is always the same. Hence, we must, if we are logical, go on obeying till the end. St. Benedict requires this from his followers. Length of service in the Monastic Life must, according to him, only increase the fervour of his Religious in their obedience. The dignity of even the priestly office must not be a plea for exemption. In one word, the Rule is to be observed in *all* things, by *all*. It is evident, therefore, from this principle of the Benedictine Rule, that obedience must be blind, courageous, and entire, till the shadows of this life shall pass away, and the humble disciple shall be ushered into the bright kingdom of Our Father, to receive the reward of his patient struggling after that measure of perfection unto which Almighty God has called him.

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